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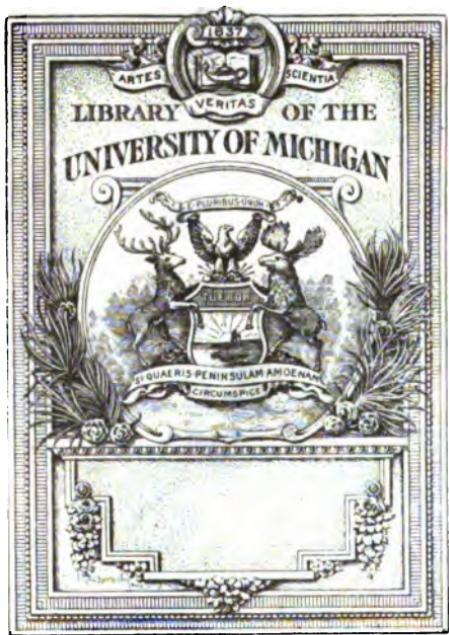
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# B E L G R A V I A

A London Magazine.

VOL. LXXIII.

*SEPTEMBER to DECEMBER*  
*and*  
*BELGRAVIA ANNUAL, 1890.*



London:  
F. V. WHITE & CO.,  
31, SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.  
1890.

**PRINTED BY**

**KELLY AND CO., GATE STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, W.C.  
AND MIDDLE MILL, KINGSTON-ON-THAMES**

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# BELGRAVIA

SEPTEMBER, 1890.

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## April's Lady.

BY MRS. HUNTERFORD,

Author of "MOLLY BAWN," "PHYLLIS," "A LIFE'S REMORSE," etc.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

"A bitter and perplexed 'What shall I do?'  
Is worse to man than worse necessity."

THREE months have come and gone and winter is upon us. It is close on Christmastide indeed. All the trees lie bare and desolate, the leaves fallen from them, and their sweet denizens the birds, flown or dead.

Evening has fallen. The children are in the nursery, having a last romp before bed-hour. Their usual happy hunting-ground for that final fling, is the drawing-room, but finding the atmosphere there, to-night, distinctly cloudy, they had beaten a simultaneous retreat to Bridget, and the battered old toys upstairs. Children, like rats, dislike discomfort.

Mrs. Monkton, sitting before the fire, that keeps up a continuous sound as musical as the rippling of a small stream, is leaning back in her chair; her pretty forehead puckered into a thousand doubts. Joyce, near her, is as silent as she is; whilst Mr. Monkton, after a vain pretence at being absorbed in the morning paper (diligently digested at eleven this morning), flings it impatiently on the floor.

"What's the good of your looking like that, Barbara? If you were compelled to accept this invitation from my Mother, I could see some reason for your dismal glances, but when you know I

am as far from wishing you to accept it, as you are yourself, why should——”

“Ah! but *are you?*” says his wife, with a swift, dissatisfied glance at him. The dissatisfaction is a good deal directed towards herself.

“If you could make her sure of that,” says Joyce softly; “I have tried to explain it to her, but——”

“I suppose I *am* unreasonable,” says Barbara, rising, with a little laugh that has a good deal of grief in it. “I suppose I ought to believe,” turning to her husband, “that you are dying for me to refuse this invitation from the people who have covered me with insult for eight years, when I know well that you are dying for me to accept it.”

“Oh! if you know that,” says Monkton, rather feebly it must be confessed. This fatally late desire on the part of his people to become acquainted with his wife and children has taken hold of him; has lived with him through the day, not for anything he personally could possibly gain by it, but because of a deep desire he has that they, his father and mother, should see and know his wife, and learn to admire and love her.

“Of course I know it,” says Barbara almost fiercely. “Do you think I have lived with you all these years, and cannot read your heart? Don’t think I blame you, Freddy! If the cases were reversed, I should feel just like you. I should go to any lengths to be at one with my own people.”

“I don’t want to go to even the shortest length,” says Mr. Monkton. As if a little nettled, he takes up the dull old local paper again, and begins a third severe examination of it. But Mrs. Monkton, feeling that she cannot survive another silence, lays her hand upon it, and captures it.

“Let us talk about it, Freddy,” says she.

“It will only make you more unhappy.”

“Oh, no. I think not. It will do her good,” says Joyce anxiously.

“Where is the letter? I hardly saw it. *Who* is asked?” demands Barbara feverishly.

“Nobody in particular, except you. My father has expressed a wish that we should occupy that house of his in Harley Street for the winter months, and my mother puts in, accidentally as

it were, that she would like to see the children. But *you* are the one specially alluded to."

"They are too kind!" says Barbara rather unkindly herself.

"I quite see it in your light. It is an absolute impertinence," says Monkton with a suppressed sigh. "I allow all that. In fact I am with you, Barbara, all through ; why keep thinking about it? Put it out of your head. It requires nothing more than a polite refusal."

"I shall hate to make it polite," says Barbara. And then, recurring to her first and sure knowledge of his secret desires, "you *want* to go to them?"

"I shall never go without you," returns he gravely.

"Ah! that is almost a challenge," says she, flushing.

"Barbara! perhaps he is right," says Joyce, gently ; as she speaks, she gets up from the fire, and makes her way to the door, and from that to her own room.

"Will you go without me?" says Barbara, when she has gone, looking at her husband with large, earnest eyes.

"Never. You say you know me thoroughly, Barbara ; why then ask that question?"

"Well, you will never go then," says she, "for I—I will never enter those people's doors. I *couldn't*, Freddy. It would *kill* me!" She has kept up her defiant attitude so successfully, and for so long, that Mr. Monkton is now electrified when she suddenly bursts into tears and throws herself into his arms.

"You think me a beast!" says she, clinging to him.

"You are tired ; you are bothered. Give it up, darling," says he, patting her on the back, the most approved modern plan of reducing people to a state of common sense.

"But you do think it, don't you?"

"No, Barbara. There now, be a good sensible girl, and try to realise that I don't want you to accept this invitation ; and that I am going to write to my mother in the morning to say it is impossible for us to leave home just now—as—as—eh?"

"Oh, anything will do."

"As baby is not very well? That's the usual polite thing, eh?"

"Oh! no, *don't* say that," says Mrs. Monkton in a little frightened tone. "It—it's unlucky! It might—I'm not a bit superstitious, Freddy, but it might affect baby in some way—do him some harm."

"Very well, we'll tell another lie," says Mr. Monkton cheerfully. "We'll say you've got the neuralgia badly, and that the doctor says it would be as much as your life is worth to cross the Channel at this time of year."

"That will do very well," says Mrs. Monkton readily.

"But—I'm not a bit superstitious either," says he solemnly. "But it might affect *you* in some way, do you some harm, and—"

"If you are going to make a jest of it, Freddy!——"

"It is you who have made the jest. Well; never mind, I accept the responsibility, and will create even another taradiddle. If I say we are disinclined to leave home just now, will that do?"

"Yes," says she, after a second's struggle with her better self, in which it comes off the loser.

"That's settled then," says Mr. Monkton. "Peace with honour is assured. Let us forget that unfortunate letter, and all the appurtenances thereof."

"Yes. Do let us, Freddy," says she, as if with all her heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

But the morning convinces Monkton that the question of the letter still remains unsettled. Barbara for one thing has come down to breakfast, gowned in her very best morning frock, one reserved for those rare occasions when people drop in over night and sleep with them. She has indeed all the festive appearance of a person who expects to be called away at a second's notice into a very vortex of dissipation.

Joyce, who is quite as impressed as Monkton with her appearance, gazes at her with a furtive amazement, and both she and Monkton wait in a sort of studied silence to know the meaning of it. They aren't given long to possess their souls in patience.

"Freddy, I don't think Mabel ought to have any more jam," says Mrs. Monkton, presently, "or Tommy either." She looks at the children as she speaks, and sighs softly. "It will cost a great deal," says she.

"The jam?" says her husband. "Well, really at the rate they are consuming it—I——"

"Oh, no. The railway—the boat—the fare—the whole journey," says she.

"The *journey*?" says Joyce.

"Why to England, to take them over there to see their grandmother," says Mrs Monkton, calmly.

"But, Barbara——"

"Well, dear?"

"I thought——"

"Barbara! I really considered that question decided," says her husband, not severely, however. *Is* the dearest wish of his heart to be accomplished at last. "I thought you had finally made up your mind to refuse my mother's invitation?"

"I shall not refuse it," says she slowly. "Whatever *you* may do."

"I?"

"You said you didn't want to go," says his wife, severely. "But I have been thinking it over, and——" Her tone has changed, and a slight touch of pink has come into her pretty cheeks. "After all, Freddy, why should I be the one to keep you from your people?"

"You aren't keeping me. Don't go on that."

"Well, then, will you go by yourself and see them?"

"Certainly not."

"Not even if I give you the children to take over?"

"Not even then."

"You see," says she, with a sort of sad triumph, "I *am* keeping you from them. What I mean is, that if you had never met me you would now be friends with them."

"I'd a great deal rather be friends with you," says he, struggling wildly but firmly with a mutton chop that has been done to death by a bad cook.

"I know that," in a low and troubled tone, "but I know too, that there is always unhappiness where one is on bad terms with one's father and mother."

"My dear girl, I can't say what bee you have got in your bonnet now, but I beg you to believe I am perfectly happy at this present moment, in spite of this confounded chop that has been done to a chip. 'God sends meat, the devil sends cooks.' That's not a prayer, Tommy, you needn't commit it to memory."

"But there's 'God' and the 'devil' in it," says Tommy, sceptically, "that always means prayers."

"Not *this* time. And you can't pray to *both*; your mother has taught you that; you should teach her something in return. That's only fair, isn't it?"

"She knows everything," says Tommy, dejectedly. It is quite plain to his hearers that he regrets his mother's universal knowledge—that he would have dearly liked to give her a lesson or two.

"Not everything," says his father. "For example, she cannot understand that I am the happiest man in the world; she imagines I should be better off if she was somebody else's wife and somebody else's mother."

"Whose mother?" demands Tommy, his eyes growing round.

"Ah, that's just it. You must ask her. She has evidently some *arrière pensée*."

"Freddy," says his wife, in a low tone.

"Well! What am I to think? You see," to Tommy, who is now deeply interested, "if she wasn't *your* mother, she'd be somebody else's."

"No, she wouldn't," breaks in Tommy, indignantly. "I wouldn't *let* her, I'd hold on to her. I—" with his mouth full of strawberry jam, yet striving nobly to overcome his difficulties of expression, "I'd *beat* her!"

"You shouldn't usurp my privileges," says his father, mildly.

"Barbara!" says Joyce, at this moment. "If you have decided on going to London, I think you have decided wisely; and it may not be such an expense after all. You and Freddy can manage the two eldest children very well on the journey, and I can look after baby until you return. Or else, take nurse, and leave baby entirely to me."

Mrs. Monkton makes a quick movement.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

"And I go to brave a world I hate  
And woo it o'er and o'er,  
And tempt a wave, and try a fate  
Upon a stranger shore."

"I SHALL take the three children and you *too*, or I shall not go at all," says she, addressing her sister with an air of decision.

"If you have really made up your mind about it," says Mr.

Monkton, "I agree with you. The house in Harley Street is big enough for a regiment, and my mother says the servants will be in it on our arrival, if we accept the invitation. Joyce will be a great comfort to us, and a help on the journey over, the children are so fond of her."

Joyce turns her face to her brother-in-law and smiles in a little pleased way. She has been so grave of late that they welcome a smile from her now at any time, and even court it. The pretty lips, erstwhile so prone to laughter, are now too serious by far. When, therefore, Monkton or his wife go out of their way to gain a pleased glance from her and *succeed*, both feel as though they had achieved a victory.

"Why have they offered us a separate establishment? Was there no room for us in their own house?" asks Mrs. Monkton presently.

"I daresay they thought we should be happier, so; in a place of our own."

"Well, I daresay we shall." She pauses for a moment. "Why are they in town now—at this time of year? Why are they not in their country house?"

"Ah! that is a last thorn in their flesh," says Monkton, with a quick sigh. "They have had to let the old place to pay my brother's debts. He is always a trouble to them. This last letter points to greater trouble still."

"And in their trouble they have turned to you—to the little grandchildren," says Joyce, softly. "One can understand it."

"Oh, yes. Oh, you should have *told* me," says Barbara, flushing as if with pain. "I am the hardest person alive, I think. You think it?" looking directly at her husband.

"I think only one thing of you," says Mr. Monkton, rising from the breakfast-table with a slight laugh. "It is what I have always thought, that you are the dearest and loveliest thing on earth." The bantering air he throws into this speech does not entirely deprive it of the truthful tenderness that formed it. "There," says he, "that ought to take the gloom off the brow of any well-regulated woman, coming as it does from an eight-year-old husband."

"Oh, you *must* be older than that," says she, at which they all laugh together.

"You are wise to go, Barbara," says Joyce, now in a livelier

way, as if that last quick, unexpected feeling of amusement has roused her to a sharper sense of life. "If once they *see* you!—No, you mustn't put up your shoulder like that—I tell you, if once they looked at you, they would feel the measure of their folly."

"I shall end by fancying myself," says Mrs. Monkton, impatiently, "and then you will all have fresh work cut out for you; the bringing of me back to my proper senses. Well," with a sigh, "as I *have* to see them, I wish——"

"What?"

"That I could be a heartier believer in your and Joyce's flattery, or else, that they, your people, were not so prejudiced against me. It will be an ordeal."

"When you are about it, wish them a few grains of common sense," says her husband wrathfully. "Just fancy the folly of an impertinence that condemned a fellow being on no evidence whatsoever; neither eye nor ear were brought in as witnesses."

"Oh, well," says she, considerably mollified by his defamation of his people, "I daresay they are not so much to be blamed after all. And," with a little, quick laugh at her sister, "as Joyce says, my beauties are still unknown to them; they *will* be delighted when they see me."

"They will indeed," returns Joyce stolidly. "And so you are really going to take me with you. Oh, I *am* glad. I haven't spent any of my money this winter, Barbara; I have some, therefore, and I have always wanted to see London."

"It will be a change for the children too," says Barbara, with a troubled sigh. "I suppose," to her husband, "they will think them very countrified."

"Who?"

"Your mother——"

"What do you think of them?"

"Oh, that has got nothing to do with it."

"Everything rather. You are analyzing them. You are exalting an old woman who has been unkind to you at the expense of the children who love you!"

"Ah, she analyzes them because she too loves them!" says Joyce. "It is easy to pick faults in those who have a real hold upon our hearts. For the rest—it doesn't concern us how the world regards *them*."

"It sounds as if it ought to read the other way round," says Monkton.

"No, no. To love is to see faults, not to be blind to them. The old reading is wrong," says Joyce.

"You are unfair, Freddy," declares his wife with dignity; "I would not decry the children. I am only a little nervous as to their reception. When I know that your father and mother are prepared to receive them as *my* children, I know they will get but little mercy at their hands."

"That speech isn't like you," says Monkton, "but it is impossible to blame you for it."

"They are the dearest children in the world," says Joyce. "Don't think of them. They *must* succeed. Leave them alone to fight their own battles."

"You may certainly depend upon Tommy," says his father. "For any emergency that calls for fists and heels, where battle, murder and sudden death are to be looked for, Tommy will be all there."

"Oh! I do hope he will be good," says his mother, half amused, but plainly half terrified as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two weeks later sees them settled in town, in the Harley Street house, that seems enormous and unfriendly to Mrs. Monkton, but delightful to Joyce and the children, who wander from room to room and, under her guidance, pretend to find bears and lions and bogies in every corner.

The meeting between Barbara and Lady Monkton had not been satisfactory. There had been very little said on either side, but the chill that lay on the whole interview had never thawed for a moment.

Barbara had been stiff and cold, if entirely polite, but not at all the Barbara to whom her husband had been up to this accustomed. He did not blame her for the change of front under the circumstances, but he could hardly fail to regret it, and it puzzled him a great deal to know how she did it.

He was dreadfully sorry about it secretly, and would have given very much more than the whole thing was worth to let his father and mother see his wife as she really is—the true Barbara.

Lady Monkton had been stiff too; unpardonably so—as it

was certainly her place to make amends—to soften and smooth down the preliminary embarrassment. But then she had never been framed for suavity of any sort ; and an old aunt of Monkton's, a sister of hers, had been present during the interview, and had helped considerably to keep up the frigidity of the atmosphere.

She was not a bad old woman at heart, this aunt. She had indeed from time to time given up all her own small patrimony to help her sister to get the eldest son out of his many disreputable difficulties. She had done this, partly for the sake of the good old family names on both sides, and partly because the younger George Monkton was very dear to her.

From his early boyhood the Scapegrace of the family had been her admiration, and still remained so—in imagination. For years she had not seen him, and perhaps this (that *she* considered a grievance) was a kindness vouchsafed to her by Providence. Had she seen the pretty boy of twenty years ago as he now is she would not have recognised him. The change from the merry, blue-eyed, daring lad of the past, to the bloated, blear-eyed, reckless-looking man of to-day, would have been a shock too cruel for her to bear. But this she was not allowed to realise, and so remained true to her belief in him, as she remembered him.

In spite of her many good qualities, she was, nevertheless, a dreadful woman ; the more dreadful to the ordinary visitor because of the false front she wore, and the flashing purchased teeth that shone in her upper jaw. She lived entirely with Sir George and Lady Monkton, having indeed given them every penny that would have enabled her to live elsewhere. Perhaps of all the many spites they owed their elder son, the fact that his iniquities had inflicted upon them his maternal aunt for the rest of her natural days, was the one that rankled keenest.

She disliked Frederic, not only intensely, but with an openness that had its disadvantages—not for any greater reason than that he had behaved himself so far in his journey through life more creditably than his brother. She had always made a point against him of his undutiful marriage, and never failed to add fuel to the fire of his father's and mother's resentment about it, whenever that fire seemed to burn low.

Altogether she was by no means an amiable old lady, and

being very hideous into the bargain, was not much run after by Society generally. She wasn't of the least consequence in any way, being not only old, but very poor; yet people dreaded her, and would slip away round doors and corners to avoid her tongue. She succeeded, in spite of all drawbacks, in making herself felt; and it was only one or two impervious beings, such as Dicky Browne for example (who knew the Monktons well, and was indeed distantly connected with them through his mother), who could endure her manners with any attempt at equanimity.

---

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Strength, wanting judgment and policy to rule, overturneth itself."

IT was quite impossible, of course, that a first visit to Lady Monkton should be a last from Barbara. Lady Monkton had called on her the very day after her arrival in town, but Barbara had been out then. On the occasion of the latter's return visit the old woman had explained that going out was a trial to her, and Barbara in spite of her unconquerable dislike to her, had felt it to be her duty to go and see her now and then. The children too had been a great resource. Sir George, especially, had taken to Tommy, who was quite unabashed by the grandeur of the stately, if faded, old rooms in the Belgravian mansion, but was full of curiosity, and spent his visits to his grandfather cross-examining him about divers matters—questionable and otherwise—that tickled the old man, and kept him laughing.

It had struck Barbara that Sir George had left off laughing for some time. He looked haggard—uneasy—miserably expectant. She liked him better than she liked Lady Monkton, and though reserved with both, relaxed more to him than to her mother-in-law. For one thing, Sir George had been unmistakably appreciative of her beauty, and her soft voice and pretty manners. He liked them all. Lady Monkton had probably noticed them quite as keenly, but they had not pleased her. They were indeed an offence. They had placed her in the wrong. As for old Miss L'Estrange, the aunt, she regarded the young wife from the first with a dislike she took no pains to conceal.

This afternoon, one of many that Barbara has given up to duty, finds her as usual in Lady Monkton's drawing-room, listening to her mother-in-law's comments on this and that, and trying to keep her temper, for Frederic's sake, when the old lady finds fault with her management of the children.

The latter (that is, Tommy and Mabel) have been sent to the pantomime by Sir George, and Barbara with her husband have dropped in towards the close of the day to see Lady Monkton, with a view to recovering the children there, and taking them home with them, Sir George having expressed a wish to see the little ones after the play, and hear Tommy's criticisms on it, which he promised himself would be lively. He had already a great belief in the powers of Tommy's descriptions.

In the meantime the children have not returned, and conversation, it must be confessed, languishes. Miss L'Estrange, who is present, in a cap of enormous dimensions, and a temper calculated to make life hideous to her neighbours, scarcely helps to render more bearable the dulness of everything. Sir George in a corner, is buttonholing Frederic, and saddening him with last accounts of the Scapegrace.

Barbara has come to her final pretty speech—silence seems imminent—when suddenly Lady Monkton flings into it a bombshell that explodes, and carries away with it all fear of commonplace dulness at all events.

"You have a sister, I believe," says she to Barbara in a tone she fondly but erroneously imagines gracious.

"Yes," says Barbara softly, but curtly. The fact that Joyce's existence has never hitherto been alluded to by Lady Monkton renders her manner even colder than usual—which is saying everything.

"She lives with you?"

"Yes," says Barbara again.

Lady Monkton, as if a little put out by the determined taciturnity of her manner, moves forward on her seat, and pulls the lace lappets of her dove grey cap more over to the front impatiently. Long, soft lappets they are, falling from a gem of a little cap, made of priceless lace, and with a beautiful old face beneath to frame. A face like an old miniature; and as stern as most of them, but charming for all that, and perfect in every line.

"Makes herself useful no doubt," growls Miss L'Estrange from the opposite lounge, her evil old countenance glowing with the desire to offend. "That's why one harbours one's poor relations—to get something out of them."

This is a double-barrelled explosion. One barrel for the detested wife of the good Frederic, one for the sister she has befriended—to that sister's cost.

"True," says Lady Monkton, with an uncivil little upward glance at Barbara. For once—because it suits her—she has accepted her sister's argument, and determined to take no heed of her scarcely veiled insult. "She helps you, no doubt. Is useful with the children I *hope*. Moneyless girls should remember that they are born into the world to work, not to idle."

"I am afraid she is not as much help to me as you evidently think necessary," says Barbara smiling, but not pleasantly. "She is very seldom at home; in the summer at all events." It is abominable to her to think that these hateful old people should regard Joyce, her pretty Joyce, as a mere servant—a sisterly maid-of-all-work.

"And if not with you—where then?" asks Lady Monkton, indifferently, and as if more with a desire to keep up the dying conversation than from any acute thirst for knowledge.

"She stays a good deal with Lady Baltimore," says Barbara feeling weary, and angry, and rather disgusted.

"Ah! Indeed! Sort of companion — a governess I suppose?"

A long pause. Mrs. Monkton's dark eyes grow dangerously bright, and a quick colour springs into her cheeks.

"No!" begins she, in a low, but indignant tone, and then suppresses herself. She can't—she *mustn't* quarrel with Freddy's people! "My sister is neither companion nor governess to Lady Baltimore," says she icily. "She is only—her friend."

"Friend?" repeats the old lady, as if not quite understanding.

"A great friend," repeats Barbara calmly. Lady Monkton's astonishment is even more insulting than her first question. But Barbara has made up her mind to bear all things.

"There are friends and *friends*," puts in Miss L'Estrange, with her most offensive air.

A very embarrassing silence falls on this. Barbara would say

nothing more—an inborn sense of dignity forbidding her—but this does not prevent a very natural desire, on her part, to look at her husband, not so much to claim his support as to know if he has heard.

One glance assures her that he has. A pause in the conversation with his father has enabled him to hear everything. Barbara has just time to note that his brow is black, and his lips ominously compressed before she sees him advance towards his mother.

"You seem to be very singularly ignorant of my wife's status in Society—" he is beginning in a rather terrible tone, when Barbara, with a little graceful gesture checks him. She puts out her hand and smiles up at him, a wonderful smile under the circumstances.

"Ah! that is just it," she says sweetly, but with determination. "She *is* ignorant where we are concerned—Joyce and I. If she had only spared time to ask a little question or two! But as it is—" The whole speech is purposely vague, but full of contemptuous rebuke, delicately veiled. This small revenge she permits herself. "It is nothing I assure you, Freddy. Your mother is not to be blamed. She has not understood. That is all."

"I fail even now to understand," says the old lady, with a somewhat tremulous attempt at self-assertion.

"So do I," says the antique upon the lounge near her, bristling with a wrath so warm that it has unsettled the noble structure on her head, and placed it in quite an artful situation, right over her left ear. "I see nothing to create wrath in the mind of anyone, in the idea of a young—er—" She comes to a dead pause, she had plainly been going to say young person—but Frederic's glare has been too much for her. It has frightened her into good behaviour, and she changes the obnoxious word into one more complaisant.

"A young *what*?" demands he imperiously, freezing his aunt with a stony stare.

"Young *girl!*" returns she, toning down a little, but still betraying malevolence of a very advanced order in her voice and expression. "I see nothing derogatory in the idea of a young girl devoid of fortune taking a—"

Again she would have said something insulting. The word

"situation" is on her lips, but the venom in her is suppressed a second time by her nephew.

"Go on," says he, sternly.

"Taking a—er—*position*—in a nice family," says she, almost spitting out the words like a bad old cat.

"She has a position in a very nice family," says Monkton readily. "In mine! As companion, friend, playfellow, in fact anything you like of the light order of servitude. We *all* serve, my dear aunt, though that idea doesn't seem to have come home to you. We must all be in bondage to each other in this world—the only real freedom is to be gained in the world to come. You have never thought of *that*? Well, think of it now. To be kind, to be sympathetic, to be even commonly civil to people is to fulfil the law's demands."

"You go too far; she is old, Freddy," Barbara has scarcely time to whisper, when the door is thrown open, and Dicky Browne, followed by Felix Dysart, enter the room.

It is a relief to everybody. Lady Monkton rises to receive them, with a smile. Miss L'Estrange looks into the teapot. Plainly she can still see some tea-leaves there. Rising, she inclines the little silver kettle over them and creates a second Deluge. She has again made tea. May she be forgiven!

"Going to give us some tea, Miss L'Estrange?" says Dicky bearing down upon her with a beaming face. She has given him some before this. "One can always depend upon you for a *good* cup. Ah, thanks. Dysart; I can recommend this. *Have a cup; do.*"

"No, thank you," says Dysart, who has secured a seat next to Barbara, and is regarding her anxiously, whilst replying to her questions of surprise at seeing him in Town at this time of year. She is surprised, too, and a little shocked to see him look so ill.

Dicky is still holding a brilliant conversation with Miss L'Estrange, who, to him, is a joy for ever.

"Didn't expect to see me here again so soon, eh?" says he, with a cheerful smile.

"There you are wrong," returns that spinster, in the hoarse croak that distinguishes her. "The fact that you were here yesterday and couldn't reasonably be supposed to come again for a week, made it at once a certainty that you would turn up im-

mediately. The unexpected is what always happens where you are concerned."

"One of my many charms," says Mr. Browne, gaily, hiding his untasted cup, by a skilful movement, behind the sugar bowl. "Variety, you know, is ever charming. I'm a various person; therefore *I'm* charming."

"*Are you?*" says Miss L'Estrange, grimly.

"Can you look at me and doubt it?" demands Mr. Browne, deep reproach in his eyes.

"I can," returns Miss L'Estrange, presenting an uncompromising front. "I can also suggest to you that those lumps of sugar are meant to put in the cups *with* the tea, not to be consumed wholesale. Sugar, plain, is ruinous to the stomach, and disastrous to the teeth."

"True, true," says Mr. Browne, absently, "and both mine are so pretty."

Miss L'Estrange rises to her feet, and confronts him with a stony glare.

"Both *what?*" demands she.

"Eh? Why, both of *them*," persists Mr. Browne.

"I think, Richard, that the sooner you return to your hotel, or whatever low haunt you have chosen as your present abode, the better it will be for all present."

"Why so?" demands Mr. Browne, indignantly. "What have I done now?"

"You know very well, sir," says Miss L'Estrange, "your language is disgraceful. You take an opportunity of turning an innocent remark of mine, a kindly warning into a ribald——"

"Good heavens!" says he, uplifting brows and hands. "I never yet knew it was ribaldry to talk about one's teeth."

"You were *not* talking about your teeth," says Miss L'Estrange sternly. "You said distinctly, '*both of them*!'"

"Just so," says Dicky. "I've only got two."

"Is that the truth, Richard?" with increasing majesty.

"Honest Injun!" says Mr. Browne, unabashed. "And *they* are out of sight. All you can see have been purchased, and I assure you dear Miss L'Estrange," with anxious earnestness, "paid for. One guinea the entire set; a single tooth, two-and-six. Who'd be without 'em?"

"Well, I'm sorry to hear it," says Miss L'Estrange, reseating

herself and regarding him still with manifest distrust. "To lose one's teeth so early in life, speaks badly for one's moral conduct. Anyhow, I shan't allow you to destroy your guinea's worth. I shall remove temptation from your path."

Lifting the sugar-bowl, she removes it to her right side, thus laying bare the fact that Mr. Browne's cup of tea is still full to the brim.

It is the last stroke.

"Drink your tea," says she to the stricken Dicky in a tone that admits of no delay. He drinks it.

Meantime, Barbara has been very kind to Felix Dysart. Answering his roundabout questions that always have Joyce as their central meaning. One leading remark of his is to the effect that he is covered with astonishment to find her and Monkton in London. Is he surprised? Well, no doubt, yes. Joyce is in Town, too, but she has not come out with her to-day. Have they been to the theatre? Very often; Joyce, specially, is quite devoted to it. Do they go much to the picture galleries? Well, to one or two. There is so *much* to be done, and the children are rather *exigeant*, and demand all the afternoon. But she had heard Joyce say that she was going to-morrow to Doré's Gallery. She thought Tommy ought to be shewn something more improving than clowns, and wild animals, and toyshops.

Mr. Dysart, at this point, said he thought Miss Kavanagh was more reflective than one taking a careless view of her might believe.

Barbara laughed.

"Do you take the reflective view?" says she.

"Do you recommend me to take the careless one?" demands he, now looking fully at her. There is a good deal of meaning in his question, but Barbara declines to recognise it. She feels she has gone far enough in that little betrayal about Doré's Gallery. She refuses to take another step; she is already, indeed, a little frightened by what she has done. If Joyce should hear of it—oh!—And yet how could she refrain from giving that small push to so deserving a cause?

"No, no; I recommend nothing," says she, still laughing. "Where are you staying?"

"With my cousins, the Seaton Dysarts. They had to come

up to Town about a tooth, or a headache, or neuralgia, or something ; we shall never quite know what, as it has disappeared, whatever it is. Give me London smoke as a perfect cure for most ailments. It is astonishing what remarkable recoveries it can boast. Vera and her husband are like a couple of children. Even the pantomime isn't too much for them."

"That reminds me, the children ought to be here by this time," says Mrs. Monkton, drawing out her watch. "They went to the afternoon performance. I really think," anxiously, "they are very late—"

She has hardly spoken when a sound of little running feet up the stairs, outside, sets her maternal fears at rest. Nearer and nearer they sound ; they stop ; there is a distinct scuffle, the door is thrown violently open, and Tommy and Mabel literally *fall* into the room.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

" Then seemed to me this world far less in size,  
Likewise it seemed to me less wicked far ;  
Like points in heaven I saw the stars arise,  
And longed for wings that I might catch a star."

LEAST said, soonest mended ! Tommy is on his feet again in no time, and has picked up Mabel before you could say Jack Robinson, and once again, nothing daunted by their ignominious *entrée*, they rush up the room, and precipitate themselves upon their mother. This pious act being performed, Tommy sees fit to show some small attention to the other people present.

"Thomas," says Mr. Browne, when he has shaken hands with him, "if you wait much longer without declaring yourself you will infallibly burst, and that is always a rude thing to do in a friend's drawing-room. Speak, Thomas, or die—you are evidently full of information!"

"Well, I won't tell *you*!" says Tommy, naturally indignant at this address. He throws a resentful look at him over his shoulder while making his way to his grandfather. There is a queer sort of sympathy—understanding—what you will—between the child and the stern old man.

"Come here," says Sir George, drawing Tommy to him. "Well, and did you enjoy yourself? Was it all your fancy painted it?"

Sir George has sunk into a chair with all the heaviness of an old man, and the boy has crept between his knees, and is looking up at him with his beautiful little face all aglow.

"Oh! 'twas *lovely*!" says he. "'Twas *splendid*! There was lights all over the house. 'Twas like night—only 'twasn't night, and that was *grand*! And there were heaps of people. A whole town was there. And there were—Grandpa! why did they have lamps there when it was daytime?"

"Because they have no windows in a theatre," says Sir George, patting the little hot fat hand that is lying on his arm with a strange sensation of pleasure in the touch of it.

"*No windows?*" with big eyes opened wide.

"Not one."

"Then why have *we* windows?" asks Tommy, with an involuntary glance round him. "Why are there windows *anywhere*? It's ever so much nicer without them. Why can't we have lamps always, like the theatre people?"

"Why, indeed?" says Mr. Browne, sympathetically. "Sir George, I hope you will take your grandson's advice to heart, and block up all these absurd windows, and let a proper ray of light descend upon us from the honest burner. Who cares for strikes? Not I!"

"Well, Tommy, we'll think about it," says Sir George. "And now go on. You saw——?"

"Bluebeard!" says Tommy, almost roaring in the excitement of his delight. "A *big* Bluebeard, and he was just like the pictures of him at home, with his toes curled up, and a red towel round his head, and a blue nightgown, and a smiter in his hand."

"A scimitar, Tommy," suggests his mother gently.

"Eh?" says Tommy, "Well, it's all the same," says he, after a pause, replete with deep research, and with a truly noble impartiality.

"It is, indeed!" says Mr. Browne, open encouragement in his eye. "And so you saw Mr. Bluebeard! And did he see you?"

"Oh! he saw *me*!" cries Mabel, in a little whimpering tone. "He looked straight into the little house where we were, and I saw his eye—his *horrid* eye!" shaking her small head vigorously—"and it ran right into mine, and he began to walk up to me, and I——"

She stops, her pretty red lips quivering, her blue eyes full of tears.

"Oh, Mabel was frightened!" says Tommy the Bold.  
"She stuck her nose into nurse's fur cape and roared!"

"I didn't!" says Mabel, promptly.

"You did!" says Tommy, indignant at being contradicted,  
"and she said it would never be worth a farthing ever after,  
and— Well, anyway, you know, Mabel, you didn't like the  
*heads*."

"Oh, no, I didn't—I hated them! They were all hanging to  
one side; and there was nasty blood, and they looked as if they  
was going to *waggle*," concludes Mabel, with a terrified sob  
burying her own head in her mother's lap.

"Oh! she is too young," says Barbara, nervously, clasping her  
little woman close to her in a quiet, undemonstrative way, but  
so as to make the child herself feel the protection of her  
arms.

"Too young for so dismal a sight," says Dysart, stooping over and patting Mabel's sunny curls with a kindly touch. He is very fond of children, as are all men, good and bad.

"I should not have let her go," says Mrs. Monkton, with self-reproach. "Such exhibitions are painful for young minds, however harmless."

"When she is older—" begins Dysart, still caressing the little head.

"Yes, yes—she is too young—*far* too young," says Mrs. Monkton, giving the child a second imperceptible hug.

"One is *never* too young to learn the miseries of the world," says Miss L'Estrange, in her most terrible tone. "Why should a child be pampered and petted, and shielded from all thoughts of harm and wrong, as though they never existed? It is false treatment. It is a wilful deceiving of the growing mind. One day they must wake to all the horrors of the world. They should therefore be prepared for it, steadily, sternly, unyieldingly!"

"What a grand—what a strong nature!" says Mr. Browne, uplifting his hands in admiration. "You would, then, advocate the cause of the pantomime?" says he, knowing well that the very name of Theatre stinks in the nostrils of Miss L'Estrange.

"Far be it from me!" says she, with a violent shake of her head. "May all such disreputable performances come to a bad end, and a speedy one, is my devout prayer. But," with a vicious glance at Barbara, "I would condemn the parents who would bring their children up in a dark ignorance of the woes and vices of the world in which they must pass their lives. I think, as Mabel has been permitted to look at the pernicious exhibition of this afternoon, she should also be encouraged to look with calmness upon it, if only to teach her what to expect from life."

"Good heavens!" says Mr. Browne in a voice of horror. "Is that what she has to expect? Rows of decapitated heads! Have you had private information, Miss L'Estrange? Is a rehearsal of the French Revolution to be performed in London? Do you really believe the poor child is doomed to behold your head carried past the windows on a pike? Was there meaning in the artless prattle of our Thomas just now when he condemned windows as a social nuisance, or——"

"I suppose you think you are amusing!" interrupts the spinster, malignantly. It is plain that she objects to the idea of her head being on a pike. "At all events, if you must jest on serious subjects, I desire you, Richard, to leave *me* out of your silly maunderings."

"Your will is my law," says Dicky, rising. "*I leave you!*"

He makes a tragic retreat, and finding an empty chair near Monkton takes possession of it.

"I must protest against your opinion," says Dysart, addressing Miss L'Estrange with a smile. "Children should be regarded as something better than mere lumps of clay to be experimentalized upon!"

"Oh, yes," says Barbara, regarding the spinster gently, but with ill-concealed aversion. "You cannot expect anyone to agree with you there. I, for one, could not."

"I don't know that I ever asked you to," says Miss L'Estrange with such open impertinence that Barbara flushes up to the roots of her hair.

Silence falls on the room, except for a light conversation being carried on between Dicky and Monkton, both of whom have heard nothing. Lady Monkton looks uncomfortable; Sir George hastens to the rescue.

"Surely you haven't told us everything, Tommy?" says he, giving his grandson a little pull towards him. "Besides Mr. Bluebeard, what else was there?"

"Lots of things," says Tommy, vaguely, coming back from an eager attention to Miss L'Estrange's evil suggestion to a fresh remembrance of his past delights. "There was a band, and it *shouted*. Nurse said it took the roof off her head, but I looked and her bonnet didn't *stir*. And there was the Harlequin, he was beautiful. He shined like anything. He was all over scales, like a trout."

"A queer fish," says his grandfather.

"He jumped about, and beat things with a little stick he had. And he danced, and there was a window and he sprang right through it, and he came up again and wasn't a bit hurt, not a *bit*. Oh! he was lovely, grandpapa, and so was his concubine——"

"His *what?*" says Sir George.

"His concubine. His sweetheart. That was her name," says Tommy confidently.

There is a ghastly silence. Lady Monkton's pale old cheeks colour faintly. Miss L'Estrange glares. As for Barbara, she feels the world has at last come to an end. They will be angry with the boy. Her mission to London will have failed—that vague hope of a reconciliation through the children that she had yet scarcely allowed to herself.

Need it be said that Mr. Browne has succumbed to secret, but disgraceful mirth. A good three quarters of a full-sized handkerchief is already in his mouth—a little more of the cambric, and "accidental death through suffocation," will adorn the columns of *The Times* in the morning. Sir George, too, what is the matter with him? He is speechless—from indignation one must *hope*.

"What ails you, grandpa?" demands Tommy, after a full minute's strict examination of him.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," says Sir George, choking; "it is only—that I'm glad you have so thoroughly enjoyed yourself, and your harlequin, and—*ha, ha, ha*, your Columbine. Columbine, now mind. And here's this for you, Tommy, because you are such a good boy."

He opens the little grandson's hand and presses into the pink palm of it a sovereign.

"Thank you," says Tommy, in the polite regulation tone he has been taught, without a glance at his gift—a touch of etiquette he has been taught too. Then the curious eyes of childhood wander to the palm, and seeing the unexpected pretty gold thing lying there, he colours up to the tips of his ears with surprise and pleasure. Then sudden compunction seizes on the kindly little heart. The world is strange to him. He knows but one or two here and there. His father is poor. A sovereign—that is, a gold piece—would be rare with him—why not rare with another? Though filled with admiration and gratitude for the giver of so big a gift, the child's heart commands him not to accept it.

"Oh, it is too much," says he, throwing his arms round Sir George's neck and trying to press the sovereign back into his hand. "A shilling I'd like, but that's such a lot of shillings, and maybe you'd be wanting it." This is all whispered in the softest, tenderest way.

"No, no, my boy," says Sir George whispering back, and glad that he must whisper. His voice, even so, sounds a little queer to himself. How often he might have gladdened this child with a present, a small one, and until now—"Keep it," says he; he has passed his hand round the little head and is pressing it against his breast.

"May I? Really?" says Tommy, emancipating his head with a little jerk, and looking at Sir George with searching eyes.

"You may indeed!"

"God bless you!" says Tommy solemnly.

It is a startling remark to Sir George, but not so to Tommy. It is exactly what Nurse had said to her daughter the day before she left Ireland with Tommy and Mabel in charge, when her daughter had brought her the half of her wages. Therefore it *must* be correct. To supplement this blessing Tommy flings his arms around Sir George's neck and gives him a resounding kiss. Nurse had done that, too, to her daughter.

"God bless you, too, my dear," says Sir George, if not quite as solemnly, with considerably more tenderness. Tommy's mother, catching the words and the tone, cheers up. All is not lost yet! The situation is saved. Tommy has won the day. The inconsequent Tommy of all people! Insult to herself she

had endured—but to have the children disliked would have been more than she could bear ; but Tommy, apparently, is not disliked—by the old man at all events. That fact will be sweet to Freddy. After all, who could resist Tommy ? Tears rise to the mother's eyes. *Darling boy ! Where is his like upon the whole wide earth ? Nowhere.*

She is disturbed in her reverie by the fact that the originator of it is running towards her with one little closed fist outstretched. *How he runs—his fat calves come twinkling across the carpet.*

" See, mammy, what I've got. Grandpa gave it to me. Isn't he nice ? Now I'll buy a watch like Pappy's."

" You have made him very happy," says Barbara, smiling at Sir George over her boy's head. She rises as she speaks, and goes to where Lady Monkton is sitting, to bid her good-bye.

" I hope you will come soon again," says Lady Monkton, not cordially, but as if compelled to it ; " and I hope, too," pausing as if to gather herself together, " that when you do come you will bring your sister with you. It will give me—us—pleasure to see her." There is such a dearth of pleasure in the tone of the invitation that Barbara feels her wrath rising within her.

" Thank you," she manages to say very calmly, not committing herself either way, and presently finds herself in the street with her husband and her children. They had declined Lady Monkton's offer of the brougham to take them home.

" It was a bad time," says Monkton, whilst waiting at a crossing for a cab to come to them. " But you must try and not mind them. If the fact that I am always with you counts for anything, it may help you to endure it."

" What help could be like it ?" says she, tightening her hand on his arm.

" That old woman, my aunt. She offended you, but you must remember that she offends everybody. You thought her abominable ? "

" Oh, no. I only thought her vulgar," says Mrs. Monkton. It is the one revenge she permits herself. Monkton breaks into an irresistible laugh.

" It isn't perfect ; it *couldn't* be unless she heard you," says he. The cab has come up now, and he puts in the children and then his wife, finally himself.

" Tommy crowns all !" says he with a retrospective smile.

"Eh?" says Tommy, who has the ears of a Midas.

"Your father says you are a social success, and so does your mother," says Barbara, smiling at the child's puzzled face, and then giving him a loving little embrace.

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### CHAPTER XXXV.

"Why should two hearts in one breast lie  
And yet not lodge together?  
O, love! where is thy sympathy  
If thus our breasts you sever!"

"WELL, did you like the Gallery?" asks Mrs. Monkton, throwing aside her book to greet Joyce as she returns from Doré's. It is next day, and Barbara had let the girl go to see the pictures without telling her of her meeting with Felix, the evening before; she had been afraid to say anything about him, lest that guilty secret of hers might transpire—that deliberate betrayal of Joyce's intended visit to Bond Street on the morrow. If Joyce had heard *that*, she would, in all probability, have deferred her going there for ever—and—it was such a chance. Mrs. Monkton, who in her time had said so many hard words about match-makers, as most women have, and who would have scorned to be classed with them, had promoted and desired this meeting of Felix and Joyce with all the energy and enthusiasm of which she was capable. But that Joyce should suspect her of the truth is a fear that terrifies her.

"Very much. So did Tommy. He is very graphic in his remarks," says Joyce, sinking listlessly into a chair, and taking off her hat. She looks vexed and preoccupied. "I think he gave several very original ideas on the subjects of the pictures to those around. They seemed impressed. You know how far above the foolish feeling, *mauvaise honte*, he is? his voice 'like a silver clarion rung.' Excelsior was outdone. Everybody turned and looked at him with—"

"I hope he wasn't noisy," says Mrs. Monkton, nervously.

"With admiration, I was going to say, but you wouldn't let me finish my sentence. Oh, yes, he was quite a success. One old gentleman wanted to know if he would accept the part of art critic on his paper. It was very exciting." She leans back in her chair, the troubled look on her face growing intensified.

She seems glad to be silent, and with downcast eyes plays with the gloves lying in her lap.

"Something has happened, Joyce," says her sister, going over to her.

"Something is happening always," returns Joyce, with a rather impatient smile.

"Yes, but to you just now."

"You are sure to make me tell you sooner or later," says Miss Kavanagh, "and even if I didn't, Tommy would. I met Mr. Dysart at that gallery to-day."

"Felix?" says Mrs. Monkton, feeling herself an abominable hypocrite, yet afraid to confess the truth. Something in the girl's whole attitude forbids a confession—at this moment at all events.

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well?"

"He was glad to see you, darling?" very tenderly.

"Was he? I don't know. He looked very ill. He said he had had a bad cough. He is coming to see you."

"You were kind to him, Joyce?"

"I didn't personally insult him, if you mean that."

"Oh, no, I don't mean that, you *know* what I mean. He was ill, unhappy; you did not make him more unhappy?"

"It is always for *him!*" cries the girl, with jealous anger. "Is there never to be a thought for me? Am I nothing to you? Am I never unhappy? Why don't you ask if he was kind to me?"

"Was he ever unkind?"

"Well, you can forget! He said dreadful things to me—*dreadful*. I am not likely to forget them if you are. After all they did not hurt you."

"Joyce!"

"Yes, I know—I know everything you would say. I am ungrateful, abominable, but——He *was* unkind to me! He said what no girl would ever forgive, and yet you have not one angry word for him."

"Never mind all that," says Mrs. Monkton, soothingly. "Tell me what you did to-day—what you said."

"As little as possible," defiantly. "I tell you I don't want

ever to see him again, or hear of him ; I think I *hate* him. And he looked *dying*." She stops here, as if finding a difficulty about saying another word. She coughs nervously ; then, recovering herself, and as if determined to assert herself anew and show how real is the coldness that she has declared—"Yes, dying, I think," she says stubbornly.

"Oh, I don't think he looked as bad as that!" says Barbara, hastily, unthinkingly—filled with grief—not only at this summary dismissal of poor Felix from our earthly sphere, but for her sister's unhappiness, which is as plain to her as though no little comedy had been performed for the concealment of it.

"*You* don't!" repeats Joyce, lifting her head and directing a piercing glance at her. "You! What do you know about him?"

"Why—you just said—" stammers Mrs. Monkton, and then breaks down ignominiously.

"You knew he was in Town," says Joyce, advancing to her, and looking down on her with clasped hands and a pale face. "Barbara, speak. You knew he was here, and never told me ; you," with a sudden, fresh burst of inspiration, "sent him to that place to-day to meet me."

"Oh, no, dearest. No, indeed. He himself can tell you. It was only that he—"

"Asked where I was going to, at such and such an hour, and you told him." She is still standing over poor Mrs. Monkton in an attitude that might almost be termed menacing.

"I didn't. I assure you, Joyce, you are taking it all quite wrongly. It was only—"

"Oh! only—*only*," says the girl, contemptuously. "Do you think I can't read between the lines? I am sure you believe you are sticking to the honest truth, Barbara, but still—Well," bitterly, "I don't think he profited much by the information you gave him. Your deception has given him small satisfaction."

"I don't think you should speak to me like that," says Mrs. Monkton, in a voice that trembles perceptibly.

"I don't care what I say," cries Joyce, with a sudden burst of passion. "*You* betray me ; he betrays me ; all the world seems arrayed against me. And what have I done to anybody?" She throws out her hands protestingly.

"Joyce, darling, if you could only listen."

"Listen! I am always listening, it seems to me. To him to you, to everyone. I am tired of being silent; I *must*, speak now. I trusted you, Barbara, and you have been bad to me. Do you want to force him to make love to me, that you tell him on the very first opportunity where to find me, and in a place where I am without you, or anyone, to—"

"*Will* you try to understand?" says Mrs. Monkton, with a light stamp of her foot, her patience going as her grief increases. "He cross-examined me as to where you were, and would be, and I—I told him. I wasn't going to make a mystery of it, or *you*, was I? I told him that you were going to the Doré Gallery to-day, with Tommy. How could I know he would go there to meet you? He never said he was going. You are unjust, Joyce, both to him and to me."

"Do you mean to tell me, that for all that, you didn't know he would be at that place to-day?" turning flashing eyes upon her sister.

"How could I know? Unless a person says a thing right out, how is one to be sure what he is going to do?"

"Oh! that is unlike you. It is unworthy of you," says Joyce, turning from her scornfully. "You *did* know. And it is not," turning back again, and confronting the now thoroughly frightened Barbara, with a glance full of pathos, "it is not *that*—your insincerity—that hurt me so much—it is——"

"I didn't mean to be insincere; you are very cruel—you do not measure your words."

"You will tell me next that you meant it all for the best," with a bitter smile. "That is the usual formula, isn't it? Well, never mind, perhaps you did. What I object to is that you didn't *tell* me. That I was kept designedly in the dark both by him and you. Am I," with sudden fire, "a child or a fool, that you should seek to guide me so blindly? Well," drawing a long breath, "I won't keep *you* in the dark. When I left the Gallery, and, your *protégé*, I met—Mr. Beauclerk!"

Mrs. Monkton, stunned by this intelligence, remains silent for a full minute. It is death to her hopes. If she has met *that man* again, it is impossible to know how things have gone. His fatal influence—her unfortunate infatuation for him—all will be ruinous to poor Felix's hopes."

"You spoke to him?" asks she at last, in an emotionless tone.

"Yes."

"Was Felix with you?"

"When?"

"When you met that *odious* man."

"Mr. Beauclerk? No; I dismissed Mr. Dysart as soon as ever I could."

"No doubt. And Mr. Beauclerk, did you dismiss him as promptly?"

"Certainly not. There was no occasion."

"No inclination, either. You were kind to *him* at all events. It is only to the man who is honest and sincere that you are deliberately uncivil."

"I hope I was uncivil to neither of them."

"There is no use in your giving yourself that air with me, Joyce. You are angry with me; but why? only because I am anxious for your happiness. Oh! that hateful man, how I detest him! He has made you unhappy once—he will certainly make you unhappy again."

"I don't think so," says Joyce, taking up her hat and furs with the evident intention of leaving the room, and thus putting an end to the discussion.

"You will never think so, until it is too late. You haven't the strength of mind to throw him over, once and for all, and give your thoughts to one who is really worthy of you. On the contrary you spend your time comparing him favourably with that good and faithful Felix."

"You should put that down. It will do for his tombstone," says Miss Kavanagh, with a rather uncertain little laugh.

"At all events, it would not do for Mr. Beauclerk's tombstone—though I wish it would—and that I could put it there *at once*."

"I shall tell Freddy to read the Commandments to you," says Joyce, with a dreary attempt at mirth—"you have forgotten your duty to your neighbour."

"It is all true, however. You can't deny it, Joyce. You are deliberately—wilfully—throwing away the good for the bad. I can't bear to see it. I can't look on in silence and see you thus miserably destroying your life. How *can* you be so blind, darling?" appealing to her with hands, and voice and eyes.

"Such determined folly would be strange in anyone ; stranger far in a girl like you, whose sense has always been above suspicion."

"Did it ever occur to you," asks Joyce, in a slightly bantering tone, that but ill conceals the nervousness that is consuming her, "that you might be taking a wrong view of the situation ? That I was not so blind after all. That I——what *was* it you said?—that I spent my nights and days comparing the merits of Mr. Beauclerk with those of your friend, Felix Dysart—to your friend's discomfiture ? Now, suppose that I *did* thus waste my time, and gave my veto in favour of Mr. Dysart ? How would it be then ? It might be so, you know, for all that he, or you, or anyone could say."

"It is not so light a matter that you should trifle with it," says Mrs. Monkton, with a faint suspicion of severity in her soft voice.

"No, of course not. You are right." Miss Kavanagh moves towards the door. "After all, Barbara," looking back at her, "that applies to most things in this sad old world. What matter under heaven can we poor mortals dare to trifle with ? Not one I think. All bear within them the seeds of grief or joy. Sacred seeds, both carrying in their bosoms the germs of eternity. Even when *this* life is gone from us we must still face weal or woe."

"Still—we need not *make* our own woe," says Barbara, who is a sturdy enemy to all pessimistic thoughts. "Wait a moment, Joyce." She hurries after her, and lays her hand on the girl's shoulder. "Will you come with me next Wednesday to see Lady Monkton ?"

"Lady Monkton ! Why I thought——"

"Yes, I know. I would not take you there before, because she had not expressly asked to see you. But to-day she made a——she sent you a formal message—at all events she said she hoped I would bring you when I came again."

"Is that all of it ?" asks Joyce, gazing at her sister with a curious smile, that is troubled, but has still some growing sense of amusement in it. "What an involved statement ! Surely you have forgotten something. That Mr. Dysart was standing near you for example ? and will probably find that it is absolutely imperative that he should call on Lady Monkton next Wednesday

too? Don't set your heart on *that*, Barbara. I think, after my interview with him to-day, he will not want to see Lady Monkton next Wednesday."

"I know nothing about whether he is to be there or not," says Barbara steadily. "But as Sir George likes to see the children very often, I thought of taking them there again on that day. It is Lady Monkton's day. And Dicky Browne, at all events, will be there, and I daresay a good many of your old friends. Do say you will come."

"I *hate* old friends!" says the girl fractiously. "I don't believe I *have* any. I don't believe anybody has. I—"

She pauses as the door is thrown open, and Tommy comes prancing into the room accompanied by his father.

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### CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Children know very little; but their capacity of comprehension is great."

"I've just been interviewing Tommy on the subject of the pictures," says Mr. Monkton. "So far as I can make out he disapproves of Doré."

"Oh! Tommy! and all such beautiful pictures out of the Bible," says his mother.

"I *did* like them," says Tommy. "Only some of them were queer. I wanted to know about them, but nobody would tell me—and—"

"Why, Tommy I explained them all to you," says Joyce reproachfully.

"You did in the first two little rooms and in the big room afterwards, where the velvet seats were. They," looking at his father, and raising his voice to an indignant note, "wouldn't let me run round on the top of them!"

"Good heavens!" says Mr. Monkton. "Can that be true? Truly this country is going to the dogs."

"Where do the dogs live?" asks Tommy. "What dogs? Why does the country want to go to them?"

"It doesn't want to go," explains his father. "But it will *have* to go, and the dogs will punish them for not letting you reduce its velvet seats to powder. Never mind, go on with your story; so that unnatural aunt of yours wouldn't tell you about the pictures, eh?"

"She did in the beginning, and when we got into the big room too, a *little* while. She told me about the great large one at the end, 'Christ and the Historian,' though I couldn't see the Historian anywhere, and——"

"She herself must be a most successful one," says Mr. Monkton, *sotto voce*.

"And then we came to the Innocents, and I perfectly *hated* that," says Tommy. "'Twas frightful! Everybody was as large as *that*," stretching out his arms and puffing out his cheeks. "and the babies were all so fat and so horrid. And then Felix came, and Joyce had to talk to him, so I didn't know any more."

"I think you forget," says Joyce. "There was that picture with lions in it. Mr. Dysart himself explained that to you."

"Oh, that one!" says Tommy as if dimly remembering, "the circus one! The one with the round house. I didn't like that either."

"It *is* rather ghastly for a child," says his mother.

"*That's* not the one with the gas," puts in Tommy. "The one with the gas is just close to it, and has got Pilate's wife in it. She's very nice."

"But why didn't you like the other?" asks his father. "I think it one of the best there?"

"Well *I* don't!" says Tommy, evidently grieved at having to differ from his father; but filled with a virtuous determination to stick to the truth through thick and thin.

"No?"

"'Tis unfair," says Tommy.

"That has been allowed for centuries," says his father.

"Then why don't they change it?"

"Change what?" asks Mr. Monkton feeling a little puzzled. "How can one change now the detestable cruelties—or the abominable habits of the dark ages."

"But why were they dark?" asks Tommy. "Mammy says they had gas then?"

"I didn't mean that, I——" his mother is beginning, but Monkton stops her with a despairing gesture.

"Don't!" says he. "It would take a good hour by the slowest clock. Let him believe there was *electric* light then if he chooses."

"Well, but why *can't* they change it?" persists Tommy, who is evidently full of the picture in question.

"I have told you."

"But the painter-man could change it?"

"I am afraid not, Tommy. He is dead."

"Why didn't he do it before he died then? Why didn't somebody show him what to do?"

"I don't fancy he wanted any hints. And besides, he had to be true to his ideal. It was a terrible time! They did really throw the Christians to the lions you know."

"Of course I know *that!*" says Tommy with a superior air.  
"But why didn't they cast *another one?*"

"Eh?" says Mr. Monkton.

"*That's* why it's unfair!" says Tommy. "There is one poor lion there, and he hasn't got any Christian! Why didn't Mr. Dory give *him* one?"

Tableau!

"Barbara!" says Mr. Monkton faintly, after a long pause  
"Is there any brandy in the house?"

But Barbara is looking horrified.

"It is shocking," she says. "Why should he take such a twisted view of it. He has always been a kind-hearted child; and now—"

"Well. He has been kind-hearted to the lions," says Mr. Monkton. "No one can deny that."

"Oh! if you persist in encouraging him, Freddy!" says his wife with tears in her eyes.

"Believe me, Barbara," breaks in Joyce at this moment. "It is a mistake to be soft-hearted in this world." There is something bright but uncomfortable in the steady gaze she directs at her sister. "One should be *hard*; if one means to live comfortably."

"Will you take me soon again to see pictures?" asks Tommy, running to Joyce and scrambling upon the seat she is occupying.  
"Do!"

"But if you dislike them so much."

"Only some. And other places may be funnier. What day will you take me?"

"I don't think I shall again make an arrangement *beforehand*," says Joyce, rising, and placing Tommy on the ground very

gently. "Some morning, just before we start, you and I, we will make our plans."

She does not look at Barbara this time, but her tone is eloquent.

Barbara looks at her, however, with eyes full of reproach.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Love is its own great loveliness alway  
And takes new beauties from the touch of time ;  
Its bough owns no December and no May,  
But bears its blossoms into winter's clime.'

"I have often thought what a melancholy world this would be, without children.

"OH, Felix—is it you!" says Mrs. Monkton in a dismayed tone. Her hansom is at the door—and arrayed in her best bib and tucker, she is hurrying through the hall, when Dysart, who has just come, presents himself. He was just coming in, in fact, as she was going out.

"Don't mind me," says he; "there is always to-morrow."

"Oh, yes—but—"

"And Miss Kavanagh?"

"It is to recover her I am going out this afternoon." It is the next day, so soon after her rupture with Joyce, that she is afraid to even hint at further complications. A strong desire to let him know that he might wait and try his fortune once again on her return with Joyce, is oppressing her mind, but she puts it firmly behind her—or thinks she does. "She is lunching at the Brabazons'," she says; "old friends of ours. I promised to lunch there too, so as to be able to bring Joyce home again."

"She will be back then?"

"In an hour and a half at latest," says Mrs. Monkton, who, after all, is not strong enough to be quite genuine to her better judgments. "But," with a start and a fresh determination to be cruel in the cause of right, "that would be much too long for you to wait for us."

"I shouldn't think it long," says he.

Mrs. Monkton smiles suddenly at him. How charming—how satisfactory he is. Could any lover be more devoted!

"Well, it *would* be for all that," says she. "But," hesitating in a last vain effort to dismiss him, and then losing herself

"suppose you do not abandon your visit altogether ; that you go away now, and get your lunch at your club—I see!" contritely, "how inhospitable I am—and then come back again here about four o'clock. She—I—will have returned by that time."

"An excellent plan," says he, his face lighting up. Then it clouds again. "If she knows I am to be here?"

"Ah! that is a difficulty," says Mrs. Monkton, her own pretty face showing signs of distress. "But anyhow—*risk it*."

"I would rather she knew, however," says he steadily. The idea of entrapping her into a meeting with him is abhorrent to him. He had had enough of that at the Doré Gallery ; though he had been innocent of any intentional deception there.

"I will tell her then," says Mrs. Monkton ; "and in the meantime, go and get your——"

At this moment the door on her right is thrown open, and Tommy, with a war-whoop, descends upon them followed by Mabel.

"Oh! it's *Felix!*" cries he joyfully. "Will *you* stay with us, Felix? We've no one to have dinner with us to-day. Because mammy is going away, and Joyce is gone, and pappy is nowhere ; and Nurse isn't a bit of good—she only says, 'take care you don't choke yourselves, me dearies!'" He imitates Nurse to the life. "And dinner will be here in a minute : Mary says she's just going to bring it upstairs."

"Oh, do—do stay with us," supplements little Mabel, thrusting her small hand imploringly into his. It is plain that he is in high favour with the children, however out of it with a certain other member of the family—and feeling grateful to them, Dysart hesitates to say the "No" that is on his lips. How hard it is to refuse the entreaties of these little clinging fingers—these eager, lovely, upturned faces !

"If I *may*——?" says he at last, addressing Mrs. Monkton, and thereby giving in.

"Oh! as for that! You know you *may*," says she. "But you will perfectly hate it. It is too bad to allow you to accept their invitation. You will be bored to death, and you will detest the boiled mutton. There is only that and—rice, I think. I wont even be sure of the rice. It *may* be tapioca—and that is worse still."

"It's rice," says Tommy, who is great friends with the cook, and knows all her secrets.

"That decides the question," says Felix, gravely. "Everyone knows that I adore rice. It is my one weakness."

At this, Mrs. Monkton gives way to an irrepressible laugh, and he, catchir. The meaning of it, laughs too.

"You are ~~wrong~~, however," says he, "that other is my one strength. I could not live without it. Well, Tommy, I accept your invitation, I shall stay and lunch—dine with you." In truth, it seems sweet in his eyes to remain in the house that she (Joyce) occupies ; it will be easier to wait, to hope for her return there, than elsewhere.

"Your blood be on your own head," says Barbara solemnly. "If, however, it goes *too* far, I warn you there are remedies. When it occurs to you that life is no longer worth living, go to the library ; you will there find a revolver. It is three hundred years old, I'm told, and it is hung very high on the wall to keep it out of Freddy's reach. Blow your brains out with it—if you can."

"You're awfully good, awfully thoughtful," says Mr. Dysart, "but I don't think, when the final catastrophe arrives, it will be suicide. If I must murder *somebody*, it will certainly not be myself, it will be either the children or the mutton."

Mrs. Monkton laughs, then turns a serious eye on Tommy.

"Now, Tommy," says she, addressing him with a gravity that should have overwhelmed him. "I am going away from you for an hour or so, and Mr. Dysart has kindly accepted your invitation to lunch with him. I do *hope*," with increasing impressiveness, "you will be good."

"I hope so too," returns Tommy, genially.

There is an astonished pause, confined to the elders only, and then Mr. Dysart unable to restrain himself any longer bursts out laughing.

"Could anything be more candid ?" says he. "More full of trust in himself, and yet, with a certain modesty withal ! There ! you can go, Mrs. Monkton, with a clear conscience. I am not afraid to give myself up to the open-handed dealing of your son." Then his tone changes—he follows her quickly as she turns from him to the children to bid them good-bye.

"Miss Kavanagh," says he, "is she well—happy ?"

"She is well," says Barbara, stopping to look back at him with her hand on Mabel's shoulder—there is reservation in her answer.

"Had she any idea that I would call to-day?" This question is absolutely forced from him.

"How *could* she? Even I, did I know it? Certainly I thought you would come some day, and soon, and she may have thought so too, but—you should have told me. You called *too soon*. Impatience is a vice!" says Mrs. Monkton, shaking her head in a very kindly fashion, however.

"I suppose when she knows—when," with a rather sad smile, "you tell her—I am to be here on her return this afternoon, she will not come with you."

"Oh, yes, she will. I think so. I am *sure* of it. But you must understand, Felix, that she is very peculiar, *difficult* is what they call it now-a-days. And," pausing and glancing at him, "she is angry, too, about something that happened before you left last autumn. I hardly know what, I have imagined only, and," rapidly, "don't let us go into it, but, you will know that there was something!"

"Something, yes," says he.

"Well, a trifle, probably. I have said she is difficult. But you failed somewhere, and she is slow to pardon—where—"

"Where! What does *that* mean?" demands the young man, a great spring of hope taking life within his eyes.

"Ah, that hardly matters. But she is not forgiving. She is the very dearest girl I know, but that is one of her faults."

"She has no faults," says he, doggedly. And then: "Well, she knows I am to be here this afternoon?"

"Yes. I told her."

"I am glad of that. *If* she returns with you from the Brabazons—" with a quick but heavy sigh, "there will be hope in that."

"Don't hope too hard," says Mrs. Monkton, who in truth is feeling a little frightened. To come back *without* Joyce, and encounter an irate young man, with Freddy goodness knows where. "She may have other engagements," she says. She waves him an airy adieu as she makes this cruel suggestion, and with a kiss more hurried than usual to the children, and a good deal of nervousness in her whole manner, runs down the steps to her hansom and disappears.

Felix, thus abandoned, yields himself to the enemy. He gives his right hand to Freddy, and his left to Mabel, and lets them lead him captive into the dining-room.

"I expect dinner is cold," says Tommy cheerfully, seating himself without more ado, and watching Nurse, who is always in attendance at this meal, as she raises the cover from the boiled leg of mutton.

"Oh, no, not yet," says Mr. Dysart quite as cheerfully, raising the carving knife and fork.

Something, however, ominous in the silence that has fallen on both children makes itself felt, and without being able exactly to realize it, he suspends operations for a moment to look at them.

He finds four eyes staring in his direction, with astonishment, generously mingled with pious horror shining in their clear depths.

"Eh?" says he, involuntarily.

"Aren't you going to say it?" asks Mabel, in a severe tone.

"Say what?" says he.

"Grace!" returns Tommy with distinct disapprobation.

"Oh—er—Yes, of course. How *could* I have forgotten it," says Dysart spasmodically, laying down the carvers at once, and preparing to distinguish himself. He succeeds admirably!

The children are leaning on the table-cloth in devout expectation, that has something, however, sinister about it. Nurse is looking on, also expectant. Mr. Dysart makes a wild struggle with his memory, but all to no effect. The beginning of various prayers come with malignant readiness to his mind, the ends of several psalms, the middles of a verse or two, but the graces shamelessly desert him in his hour of need.

Good gracious! What is the usual one, the one they use at home—the—er—? He becomes miserably conscious that Tommy's left eye is cocked sideways, and is regarding him with fatal understanding. In a state of desperation he bends forward as low as he well can, wondering vaguely where on earth is his hat, and mumbles something into his plate, that *might* be a bit of a prayer but certainly it is not a grace. Perhaps it is a last cry for help.

"What's that?" demands Tommy promptly.

"I didn't hear one word of it," says Mabel with indignation

Mr. Dysart is too stricken to be able to frame a reply.

"I don't believe you *know* one," continues Tommy, still fixing him with an uncompromising eye. "I don't believe you were saying *anything*. Do you, Nurse?"

"Oh, fie now, Master Tommy, and I heard your ma telling you you were to be good."

"Well, so I *am* good. 'Tis *he* isn't good. He won't say his prayers. *Do* you know one?" turning again to Dysart, who is covered with confusion. What the deuce did he stay here for? Why didn't he go to his club? He could have been back in plenty of time. If that confounded grinning woman of a nurse would only go away it wouldn't be so bad, but——

"Never mind," says Mabel, with calm resignation. "I'll say one for you."

"No you sha'n't," cries Tommy; "it's *my* turn."

"No, it isn't."

"It *is*, Mabel. You said it yesterday. And you know you said 'relieve' instead of 'receive,' and mother laughed, and——"

"I don't care. It is Mr. Dysart's turn, to-day, and he'll give his to me: *won't* you, Mr. Dysart?"

"You're a greedy thing," cries Tommy, wrathfully, "and you *sha'n't* say it. I'll tell Mr. Dysart what you did this morning, if you do."

"I don't care," with disgraceful callousness. "I *will* say it."

"Then I'll say it, too," says Tommy, with sudden inspiration born of a determination to die rather than give in, and instantly four small fat hands are joined in pairs, and two seraphic countenances are upraised, and two shrill voices at screaming pitch, are giving thanks for the boiled mutton, at a racing speed, that censorious people might probably connect with a desire on the part of each to be first in at the finish.

Manfully they fight it out to the bitter end, without a break or a comma, and with defiant eyes glaring at each other across the table. There is a good deal of the grace; it is quite a long one when usually said, and yet very little grace in it to-day, when all is told.

"You may go now, Nurse," says Mabel, presently, when the mutton has been removed and Nurse has placed the rice and jam on the table. "Mr. Dysart will attend to us." It is im-

possible to describe the grown-up air with which this command is given. It is so like Mrs. Monkton's own voice and manner that Felix, with a start, turns his eyes on the author of it, and Nurse, with an ill-suppressed smile, leaves the room.

"That's what Mammy always says when there's only her and me and Tommy," explains Mabel, confidentially. Then, "You," with a doubtful glance, "you *will* attend to us, won't you?"

"I'll do my best," says Felix, in a depressed tone, whose spirits are growing low. After all, there was safety in Nurse!

"I think I'll come up and sit nearer to you," says Tommy, affably.

He gets down from his chair and pushes it, creaking hideously, up to Mr. Dysart's elbow—right under it, in fact.

"So will I," says Mabel, fired with joy at the prospect of getting away from her proper place, and eating her rice in a forbidden spot.

"But," begins Felix, vaguely, "do you think your mother would—"

"We *always* do it when we're alone with Mammy," says Tommy.

"She says it keeps us warm to get under her wing when the weather is cold," says Mabel, lifting a lovely little face to his and bringing her chair down on the top of his toe. "She says it keeps *her* warm, too. Are *you* warm, now?" anxiously.

"Yes, yes—*burning!*" says Mr. Dysart, whose toe is not unconscious of a corn.

"Ah! I knew you'd like it," says Tommy. "Now go on; give us our rice. A *little* rice and a *lot* of jam?"

"Is that what your mother does, too?" asks Mr. Dysart, meanly it must be confessed, but his toe is very bad still. The silence that follows his question and the look of the two downcast little faces is, however, punishment enough.

"Well, so be it," says he. "But even if we *do* finish the jam—I'm awfully fond of it, myself—we must promise faithfully not to be disagreeable about it; not to be ill, that is."

"Ill! We're never ill," says Tommy valiantly, whereupon they make an end of the jam in no time.

(To be continued.)

## The Empire in Mexico.

IN TWO PARTS.

### PART II.

IN December '65, the news of the death of King Leopold, her father, cast a shadow over the Empress Carlotta, and damped the gaieties of the Court circle in the Mexican capital. And now, too, the mutterings of the rising storm were growing clearer, they would have been deaf ears that could not hear the warning roll of the still far-off thunder.

The United States protested against the French occupation, and insistently upheld the Monroe Doctrine, of non-interference in the Western hemisphere by any European power.

The relations between the Emperor and Marshal Bazaine grew more and more strained. The Marshal was determined to maintain order with an iron hand ; the Emperor's inclinations leant always to the side of mercy. He disapproved of Bazaine's excesses, but was unable to prevent them. Bazaine acted on his own hand ; Maximilian could not undo the work once done, and had to bear the brunt of the odium attaching amongst the Liberals to the troops who represented the Imperial cause. We must, however, in fairness, remember that Bazaine only met Juarez on his own ground, with fair reprisals, shot for shot and steel to steel, and probably held himself bound by no law to show mercy to the merciless, or confine himself to mild measures when dealing with a fierce and ruthless enemy. Against such an enemy, and indeed in such a position as that into which he was now being pushed, the generous, kind-hearted and too trustful Maximilian was ill-placed. With lower ideals, a colder heart, and sterner nature, he might have done better for himself, but have left behind a less ennobling record. As a constitutional ruler of a peaceful dominion, this brave and chivalrous Prince—whose "very failings leant to virtue's side"—would have been in

his element. He was ill-matched against the turbulent and half barbaric forces in the midst of which he found himself.

Maximilian was not the man for Mexico.

In April '66, the Emperor Napoleon, who had only committed himself to a promise of support for three years, agreed to withdraw his troops in the course of the following year. In June, Matamoras was captured by the Liberals under Escobedo. On all sides the Imperial troops were harassed by guerilla bands. The tide was turning, portents thickening.

It was now decided that the Empress Carlotta should undertake her memorable mission to Europe, to represent the position of affairs to Napoleon, and endeavour to persuade him to reconsider his resolution to withdraw his troops. It is possible that Maximilian, seeing only disorder and danger ahead, wished to send his dearly-loved wife into safety, out of reach of the perils he knew her own desire would be to stay and share with him.

In July she sailed. Soon after her departure yet another blow struck the Imperial cause; Tampico, taken, lost, and retaken, fell into the hands of Juarez. Yet there was a grain of hope to be gathered from the dissensions in the Liberal camp. Juarez, Ortega, and Santa Anna, three rival Presidents, were all struggling for supremacy. In October the Emperor Maximilian moved to Orizaba; and then and there was the turning-point of his destiny! Carlotta had failed in her mission to the Tuilleries. Her eloquent arguments, persuasions, entreaties, had been in vain. All she could obtain from Napoleon was his counsel to persuade her husband to abdicate at once. She went to Rome, to seek aid from the Vatican—in vain. Under stress of anxiety, her reason gave way. Delusions shook and sapped that once fine intellect and energetic mind. At Orizaba the news of his wife's terrible malady had reached Maximilian. Napoleon urgently advised him to abdicate and sail for Europe, and at first Maximilian's own idea was to follow and join his afflicted wife.

The corvette Dandolo lay at Vera Cruz, in readiness to convey him to Europe; and at this point his fate swayed in the balance—until the Generals Marquez and Miramon, and Father Fischer, the Emperor's cabinet secretary, cast the weight of their influence into the trembling scale.

They had followed him to Orizaba, and pressed him to remain, with promises of men and money, of support from Church and Cabinet. They urged him not to forsake his party, but prove that he could dispense with the help of France. The hope of Mexico was in him ! In the continuance of his beneficent rule lay the only chance of peace and prosperity for that long-distracted land.

It was not in Maximilian's nature to turn a deaf ear to such arguments and appeals. As he had said himself :

"A Hapsburg does not desert his post in the hour of danger!"

To hold that post, to show that he and his cause could stand without French support—to fight his own battle without the assistance Carlotta had sought on his behalf in vain—this was a more tempting course to him than to retreat, surrender, give up the struggle ! He had set his hand to the plough, it was no difficult task to persuade him not to turn back ; and he consented to remain—in spite of the Emperor Napoleon's pressing advice of immediate abdication and retreat from a position the peril of which *he* probably realised more clearly than did Maximilian himself. And now already the European troops were beginning to withdraw. In January, the Belgian legion embarked for Europe. Prince Salm Salm—Maximilian's devoted adherent—endeavoured to raise a regiment for him, but found insuperable difficulties in the way. The secretary of the Belgian Legation issued a circular, warning Belgians against yielding to representations inducing them to remain in Mexico. Even the Austrian *chargé d'affaires* used his influence to prevent his countrymen from enlisting ; and consequently Prince Salm Salm, with all his energy and goodwill, failed in his attempt to raise a regiment. Bazaine did all he could in furtherance of the Emperor Napoleon's desire—probably in accordance with general instructions from the Tuilleries, which he carried out in his own way—to drive Maximilian to abdication.

At the retreat from the capital he buried four thousand shells that they should not be employed in the service of the Imperialists ; and in many ways placed impediments in the way of Maximilian's organising a new army. In February, Bazaine and his troops marched out of the city of Mexico, unregretted by the citizens, amongst whom they enjoyed a marked unpopularity.

Soon after their departure Maximilian resolved to leave the city, and join his Generals, Miramon, Castillo, Mendez, and others, at Querétaro. He was accompanied by General Marquez and his staff, amongst whom was Colonel Lopez, who was rather a favourite with the Emperor, and always received the friendliest treatment from him.

Maximilian promised to leave all foreigners behind him, and rely exclusively upon his own party amongst the natives. The wisdom of this step may be estimated by the after-conduct of Marquez and Lopez. He refused even to take his faithful friend and follower, Prince Salm Salm, with him ; but the Prince would not be left behind, and joined the party of General Vidaurri, who was about to proceed to Querétaro, and thence on to the north, there to do such work in the Imperial cause as he was excellently fitted to do, being a man well known and held in high regard.

Vidaurri had been a Liberal general, but, tired of constant revolutions and rival Presidents, antagonistic to Juarez, seeing in the Empire a chance of regular and stable government, he adopted Maximilian's cause. He was, however, still a Liberal in his opposition to the Church party, and Marquez, a strong Church partisan, distrusted Vidaurri. Indeed mutual distrust and antagonism amongst the Mexican generals was a rule—with only just enough exceptions to prove it.

Marquez, who has sometimes been called, from his ruthless disposition, the "Alva of Mexico," nevertheless exercised a strong influence over the gentler nature of Maximilian. He probably kept his summary and sanguinary proceedings out of the Emperor's sight. When Marquez proposed that certain prisoners should be shot, Maximilian forbade it, but report whispered that Marquez had them promptly shot behind the Emperor's back all the same.

Arrived at Querétaro, Maximilian was received with a warm welcome by soldiers and citizens, who were all ardent supporters of the Imperial cause.

The Generals, Miramon, Mejia, Castillo and Arellano, were there with their troops to receive him ; and General Mendez arrived with his a day or two afterwards. Don Miguel Miramon was a man of remarkable qualities. When only twenty-five years of age, he had been nominated President of the Republic, and had

held that post for a time, carrying matters with a high hand, in opposition to Juarez. Still in the early prime of life, with polished manners and prepossessing appearance, he was not long in attaining a very high—almost the highest—position in Maximilian's confidence and regard.

On his way to Querétaro, Miramon had had a narrow escape. Juarez was then in Zacatecas; on that city Miramon made a daring and successful attack, routed the Juarists, and was within an ace of capturing their leader. He had received instructions from Maximilian to treat Juarez with every respect and allow no injury to be done him—a not unnecessary instruction, it would appear, from the general conduct of the campaign. However, Juarez escaped; and a day or two afterwards the tables were turned. General Escobedo—one of the most powerful of the Juarist leaders—moved upon Miramon suddenly and unexpectedly. The Liberals fell upon the Imperialists in flank and rear; and it was Miramon's turn to escape with a handful of officers, leaving all his artillery behind him. His younger brother, Joaquim Miramon, less fortunate, was taken prisoner, wounded; and Escobedo promptly had him shot, the unfortunate young officer, too severely wounded to stand, being placed in a chair and riddled with bullets.

General Mejia, chief commander of the cavalry in Querétaro, was an Indian, of unmistakeable Indian cast of countenance, and a man of dauntless valour.

Mendez was also an Indian, indomitably brave, much beloved by his men, entirely loyal and devoted to the Emperor, but, like Marquez, inclined to ruthless and sanguinary reprisals. Nor was this tendency confined to these two of the Mexican generals. It was probably rather a racial than an individual characteristic, inherent in the Spanish-Indian blood. To the man in whose veins these two races are mixed, who is born to such a turbulent time of storm and struggle, it comes as naturally to deal death as to die. He knows he will probably be killed one day, and he means to do his share of killing beforehand.

Mendez always distrusted Miramon, and from first to last there was a coolness between these two.

The Imperial forces in Querétaro mustered some eight or nine thousand strong, and it was about one of the worst places that could have been found to defend—unless indeed by

an army large enough to occupy the surrounding hills, as the enemy could pour in cross-fires from those encircling heights and reach every spot in the city. The Convent of Santa Cruz, commonly called The Cruz—a massive building, with cannon-proof walls of solid stone, built at the time of the Spanish conquest—was rightly regarded as the citadel and stronghold of Querétaro.

In early March the Juarists made a determined attack on the city, which was successfully repulsed.

Mejia, the hero of a hundred fights, hurled himself and his cavalry upon the enemy—who could not withstand their impetuous charge; and good work was done by Prince Salm Salm's "cazadores" (of whom the Emperor had lately given him the command)—a wild corps of dashing and daring fellows, always fighting among themselves, hard to hold in hand, but desperately brave, and as their commander himself described them, when ready for the charge, all "quivering with eagerness like a pack of hounds waiting for the word." After hard fighting, the defenders of Querétaro were triumphantly successful; the enemy was driven back with great loss.

Now came the important question. Should the Imperial forces follow up their victory by assuming the aggressive, breaking out of the besieged city through the enemy's lines, and advancing on San Luis de Potosí, the head quarters of Juarez? Or should they simply stand on the defensive, and allow themselves to be shut up in Querétaro, which was not provisioned for a long siege?

By the advice of Marquez, the latter course was chosen. Indeed, it appears now that every step the unfortunate Emperor took led him nearer to his doom. It was as if his evil genius, following him, dogged his every step, and guided him straight along the path at the end of which the executioners stood.

After a council of war, it was arranged that Marquez, now Lieutenant-General of the Empire, should proceed to the city of Mexico and collect men and money to bring back to Querétaro. He was forbidden to undertake any *coup de main* that might turn him from his purpose, bound on his honour merely to fetch troops and money, and return within a fortnight. On the 23rd he started, and the day after his departure the

besieged scored another victory over an attack made upon them by the Juarists.

But in spite of the encouragement of these victories, and of Maximilian's sanguine confidence in the successful errand and speedy return of Marquez, things began to look bad in Querétaro. Mendez already foresaw the worst, but the Emperor thought he took too gloomy a view of their prospects. Provisions and ammunition were running short; and now the time was up, and there came no news of Marquez and his mission. Mendez disliked and distrusted Miramon, and Miramon cordially returned his sentiments. Things grew worse and worse as the ill-blood between these two ran higher. Each went so far as to secretly suggest that the Emperor should arrest the other. Mendez persistently doubted the loyalty of the ex-President Miramon, who once himself had held the seat of government. Mendez would not be convinced that the former President could be true to the new Emperor. Of the loyal devotion of Mendez himself there could be no doubt; but Prince Salm Salm, equally devoted, watched him with some apprehension of an outbreak of the Indian temper, if Maximilian should rouse his resentment by refusal to listen to any warnings against Miramon.

Notwithstanding the chronic distrust of Mendez, Miramon, like him, proved his faith with his life; both, unflinchingly loyal to their Emperor, died for him.

Mejia now proposed to Maximilian to break out of Querétaro with the cavalry, and move up into the region of the Sierra Gorda. The Juarist lines were drawn completely round the city, but the lines were weak at points and could certainly be broken through. In the wild Sierra Gorda country, Mejia, there known as "Pap Tomasito," was a power. Every Indian would obey his call to arms; the Indians were generally warm partisans of Maximilian; they had a tradition that a white man should one day come and be their great and good chief, and they hoped in him for the fulfilment of the prophecy. In the wild country among the Indians, the Imperialists would at least have a free hand. To remain in Querétaro, both Mendez and Mejia regarded as fatal. Miramon, however, pooh-poohed their misgivings. He advised the Emperor to hold out, and wait for Marquez, who would surely soon return with help; and the Emperor, to whom faith was always easy and distrust painful,

adopted Miramon's sanguine view, ignored the warnings of the two Indian Generals, waited—and hoped on. If Miramon's counsel were injudicious, his policy mistaken, at least he paid the price of his blunder, and paid it loyally. Meanwhile, in the divisions amongst the Republicans outside—the rivalry between aspirant and ex-Presidents, Ortega, Diaz and Santa Anna disputing authority with Juarez—there were some signs of encouragement for the Imperial party.

Still no news of Marquez, and in mid-April it was resolved to send an expedition out in search of him. Prince Salm Salm and General Moret started, but the errand was a failure; they were intercepted by the enemy, and had to retreat to Querétaro. The toils were closing, gradually but surely. The besieged were now reduced to living on horseflesh. Maximilian shared all discomforts with his troops, by whom he was warmly beloved; he had always a kind word or a smile; he passed no sufferer by without a sign of sympathy; in spite of the urgent remonstrances of his generals he would not be deterred from running the gauntlet of the enemy's fire, risking the chances of shot and shell with reckless courage; and, true to his nature, he refused to allow the hanging of prisoners suspected of being spies.

The first news of Marquez that reached Querétaro was, that he had been defeated and lost his artillery in encounter with Porfirio Diaz in early April, and was besieged in Mexico. Another blow was the news of the loss of Puebla. The Imperialists then determined on a sortie, successfully broke through the enemy's lines, captured guns, colours, and prisoners, and took the strong post of the Hacienda de Jacal; but a second attack ended in the Juarists recovering this lost position, and the Imperialists being driven back into the city.

Several of his generals now urged Maximilian to make another dash through the enemy's lines and get out of Querétaro; but Miramon still advised holding on, representing that as they could break through whenever they chose, there was no need for haste; and Maximilian was reluctant to leave his wounded and the helpless citizens at the mercy of the Juarists. However, he finally yielded to the advice of those who advocated active measures, and arrangements were made for breaking out of the city on the 14th of May—to the gratification of Mendez, who had always too truly foreboded that in Querétaro only death

awaited them. Mejia devoted himself gladly to organising his Indians for the grand *coup*, which was, however, never to come off. For various reasons the date was postponed, first to the 15th, and then to the 16th; once it was Mejia, who wanted to get more guns ready, who proposed a day's delay, which he must afterwards have remembered with regret.

Although Lopez had been on the staff of Marquez, he had not accompanied him on the mission to the capital. There was work for him in Querétaro, and he remained to do it. The Emperor seems to have trusted him entirely; on the night of the 14th, Lopez received a decoration, the medal for valour, from Maximilian's own hands. In the early morning of the 15th, the enemy—to whom he had sold the citadel for two thousand doubloons—were in the Cruz, the very heart of Querétaro.

On the alarm being given, Maximilian and a few of his faithful friends, stepping out of doors, found themselves face to face with the enemy. The Colonel in command—let his name be remembered, Don José Rincon Gallardo—recognising the Emperor, turned to his soldiers, saying, "Let them pass! they are citizens." Then, fully armed as they were, each with sword and revolver, Maximilian, his generals, Prince Salm Salm, and his secretary, passed on free. The Emperor, who was perfectly tranquil, turned to Prince Salm Salm at his side, and observed how often the good we do is returned to us—that the officer who had just let them pass had a sister, or mother, to whom the Empress had been kind.

It seems probable that Lopez, traitor though he was, did not intend to sell his chief to death: he now recommended him urgently to seek safety in the house of M. Rubio, where he could be securely concealed; he also had the Emperor's favourite piebald horse brought to him, ready saddled for escape. Maximilian however refused to hide himself. With his body-guard and a few officers, he retired to the height of the Cerro de la Campaña, and there stood with his faithful few, expecting his Red Hussars, who were intercepted and made prisoners on their way to join him. The case was now hopeless. He and his handful of followers were surrounded by the enemy. Even the gallant Mejia saw no chance of breaking through. There was nothing to do but surrender. A white flag was raised; and now the toils had closed.

The Emperor, Prince Salm Salm, Generals Mejia and Castillo were conducted to General Escobedo, and he delivered them "as prisoners of war" into the care of General Riva Palacios, who treated his august charge with due respect and courtesy.

There were those in Querétaro who were not slow to follow the example of Lopez. Miramon, who had been shot in the face on his way to join the Emperor, and had taken refuge wounded, in a house where he was promised shelter, was betrayed by one Doctor Licea ; and shortly afterwards, Mendez, who was also in concealment, was sold into the hands of the enemy, who made short work with him.

His comrades, prisoners, looking out of their window, saw him pass to his execution. He was walking along quickly, smoking a cigar ; seeing them he smiled, waved his hand, and went his way to his death with the usual impassive Indian coolness, only refusing to kneel and be shot in the back as a traitor. Forced to his knees, at the last he made an effort to rise, to turn and face the bullets as he fell.

Miramón's life was spared for the present : and after a few days he was placed in a cell near that of the Emperor in the Convent of the Capuchins—now a prison.

Maximilian authorised Prince Salm Salm, his companion in captivity, to treat with General Escobedo, and express his willingness to abdicate and leave Mexico, promising never to return. Escobedo's instructions included a free permission to shoot all the prisoners without delay ; but he considered that sufficient delay to allow of a trial would be advisable. And now Prince Salm Salm had the joy, which even in that anxious hour must have been like a flash of sunlight in the darkness, of embracing his brave wife, who had been eagerly awaiting an opportunity of entering the besieged city to join her husband. Light indeed dawned on more than her husband alone ; and Hope entered the prison with her. Princess Salm Salm was not the woman to sit down and weep and wail when she might be up and doing. Not for *her* to quail and bow before Fate, but to stand and fight it while she had a weapon left !

She was not afraid of that terrible Escobedo. She did not shrink from bearding the lion in his den. She knew—they all knew—that the prisoners' lives were in imminent danger ; and she undertook to set off for San Luis de Potosí to seek an interview

with Juarez himself, and obtain from him at least delay. She entreated Escobedo to promise the safety of the prisoners' lives until she returned from San Luis de Potosi ; and he granted so much grace.

She had brought full information of the treason of Marquez, who had deserted the losing cause. The defalcation of Marquez, his trusted General, wounded Maximilian more than the treachery of Lopez, for whom he now felt only contempt.

A plan of escape was now devised, chiefly by Prince Salm Salm, a daring plot, all the more difficult to arrange because the Emperor, who was reluctant to fly at all, and required urgent persuasion to gain his consent to the scheme, absolutely refused to contemplate any plan of escape which did not include Mejia and Miramon.

Lopez actually offered his services to the chief he had betrayed ; they were of course decisively rejected.

The dauntless American Princess—well called “our guardian angel” by the Emperor she served so well—succeeded in her mission so far that she brought back from Juarez the promise of at least delay. She now proposed to start for the city of Mexico, and bring back with her the Prussian minister, Baron von Magnus, and the best lawyers in the capital. Her journey was however accidentally and temporarily put off ; and meanwhile preparations for the escape went secretly and busily on, the Emperor, who had now fully entered into the scheme, taking an active part in the discussions, suggesting what provisions and disguises would be necessary ; he jotted down with his own hand such desired items as “a dark lantern, black thread, beeswax, and a pair of spectacles !” All was prepared and in readiness for the night of the 2nd of June, when in the early afternoon a despatch announced that Baron von Magnus and two leading lawyers had started for Querétaro.

The fate that dogged every step of the doomed Emperor was in this simple message.

He sent for Prince Salm Salm, and informed him that the Princess need not go on her errand to the city, as the gentlemen to whom she was charged with her mission were already on their way to Querétaro ; and now that they were coming he would not escape that night. In vain the Prince entreated him to carry out the plan, warning him that every hour increased the

danger of their plot being discovered and escape prevented. Maximilian refused to fly now that he knew the visitors he expected were on their way.

The Prince's apprehensions were too well grounded ; the very next day the plot was discovered, and surveillance redoubled. In spite of the close watch now kept upon him and his fellow-prisoners, the energetic Prince yet actually contrived to set on foot still another scheme, though it was now the very eve of the court-martial, from which nothing was to be hoped.

The trial was held in the theatre ; tickets had been freely distributed in order that the building might be well filled. Maximilian refused to attend the trial in such a place, to exhibit himself as a spectacle on the stage and be judged like an actor, and resolved to remain in his prison and await the result of the trial.

It was a foregone conclusion. The fatal decree of October, an unanswerable charge against him—though in its promulgation his had been the hand but not the will—now helped to seal the Emperor's doom ; the sentence pronounced upon him and his Generals, Mejia and Miramon, was death.

The Princess Salm Salm was informed by Escobedo that the air of Querétaro was very unhealthy at this time and she had better leave instantly—the hint being pointed by the arrival of a carriage and a cavalry escort ready to remove her. She asked permission to say farewell to her husband, which was refused ; and she was only able to convey to him by means of an Indian woman, who offered to act as messenger, a hastily-scribbled line. Yet one more effort the indomitable woman made. Again she went to Juarez himself and sought for mercy. Baron Von Magnus also entreated his clemency on behalf of the condemned. Juarez was inflexible. A reprieve of three days was indeed granted, but apparently for no purpose save to prolong the bitterness of the last hours. Maximilian sent an urgent prayer to Juarez that Mejia and Miramon might be spared, and his life pay for all. It was also his desire that if they must all three die, they might be shot together at the same moment ; and this at least was granted.

The second plan of escape failed as the first had done ; the officers who had been bribed to assist refused to accept their price in the form of a bill signed by Maximilian alone ; and the

Austrian *charge d'affaires*, Baron Lago, feared to compromise himself by signing it. The officers refused to trust to the honour of the Imperial House of Austria to redeem the bill signed by the Emperor Francis Joseph's brother to save his life; and thus the last hope was gone.

Maximilian accepted his fate calmly. There was nothing to shrink from in a soldier's death; he must for a long time past have contemplated it as a natural end of his career. He had cast his all upon the die—and lost, and, losing, left a stainless memory behind him. He had fought a good fight—if in a mistaken cause; his errors had been of judgment only—of the head, never of the heart. With treachery within the citadel, and ruthless enemies without, he had borne a pure and brave and blameless part; and in those last hours his thoughts might well have found expression in such words as those of Brutus, when the night was closing in on the field of Philippi:

“ I shall have glory by this losing day,  
More than Octavius and Mark Antony  
By this vile conquest shall attain unto ! ”

The wives of Mejia and Miramon had arrived in Querétaro; thus for them were those pangs of parting which were spared to their chief. He had bidden *his* farewell to the wife he loved long months before. And now at the last, the rumour of her death had reached Querétaro—a false report, the contradiction of which he did not live to hear. It cost him no anguish of grief. He stood so near to death that it seemed rather a re-union than a parting. “One tie the less that binds me to life,” he said; and expressed his gladness too that she, living, would never hear the story of his doom.

He took a friendly farewell of those around him, and went tranquilly to his death. When he stepped out of the prison he looked calmly around, up at the glowing blue sky and tropical sunshine, and said, drawing a deep breath:

“ Ah, what a splendid day! I always wished to die on such a day ! ”

In the streets, along which the citizens had crowded to cheer and welcome their Emperor three months before, the women wept as they saw the carriage pass conveying him to the place of execution. But few were assembled there, probably because

the hour and the spot had not been made publicly known. Some of the group were in tears. Maximilian looked around at them with a kind and friendly smile ; then, stepping up to the firing-party, he gave each soldier in turn his hand and a gold piece, saying :

“ Muchachos !” (“ Boys ”) “ aim well ; aim here !” pointing to his heart.

He embraced his two brave Generals, “ faithful unto death,” who were to fall with him, and spoke a few last words of farewell and goodwill to his adopted land, ending “ May my blood be the last which shall be shed for the welfare of this country ! Viva Mexico ! ”

And Mejia and Miramon echoed “ Viva Mexico ! ”

Then calmly, as a soldier should, Maximilian stood up, “ with hand and brow unbound,” facing the muzzles of the levelled guns.

The signal was given.

In that crash and roll of musketry and pall of smoke, the star of the new Empire was quenched for ever ; and with the echo of that volley overseas there fled the last hope of the restoration of reason to the darkened mind of the ex-Empress Carlotta.

THE END.

## Five Years as a Governess.

"But yet the pity of it, Iago ! oh, Iago ! the pity of it, Iago !"

WHEN I was only eighteen years old, my father died and our happy home was broken up. He had always been the best and kindest of fathers ; his only fault (which of course his children hardly thought one) was that he could not say no ; so that his heart and his purse were ever open to tales of distress, real or skilfully invented, and he was constantly imposed upon. He was always careless in money matters, still we were little prepared for the revelations that were made when his affairs were looked into. We had always lived in the greatest comfort, I might say luxury, so that when it was discovered that when all claims were settled, little more than £200 a year remained for my mother, my younger sister and myself, to live upon, it was a shock that, after the bitter grief of my dear father's death, completely prostrated us all and made us feel that sorrows "come not single spies" indeed.

My mother had always been very delicate, which made the change harder for her to bear, and I thought if I could try in some way to earn my own living, there would be more chance for her to have some at least of the many comforts she had always been accustomed to. Perhaps I was wrong . . . I know my dear mother opposed my resolution with all her might, but still I persevered.

Now that I am a few years older, and look back upon this time, it seems to me distinctly that I *was* wrong : that, even if my mother had had to forego some luxuries, the comfort of having me with her would have made up to her loving heart for all, but I did what I thought right at the time, and if I hadn't done so, these sketches would never have been written !

Of course the first thing I thought of was a situation as a governess. I had never been to school, as my dear father had always said he could not spare his girls so long out of his sight, but I had had the best of masters and a first-rate education,

so I thought I might perhaps be able to turn it to some account, and, after weary weeks of delay, and many disappointments, I at last got an engagement to teach four children, aged from twelve down to seven. It did not seem a very promising situation, but I was anxious to begin my new life of independence, so I wrote and undertook the task of entirely instructing four children of different ages for the inadequate remuneration of £25 a year.

I can never forget my first arrival at W—, after the long journey from our southern home. The look of the sky alone (or rather the black clouds that hung low over the town, and hid the sky, for W— is in the heart of the factory district), was enough to depress any one coming straight from the pure air and sunshine of the country.

I hope I may never again feel quite so miserable as I did that night ; the contrast between the loving home I had just left and the cold welcome, if such it could be called, that awaited me was too much for me, and my courage nearly gave way altogether. But I daresay many of my readers have gone through the like experience ; if so, they will perhaps feel for me, for sorrow teaches sympathy—sometimes.

I soon found that my new mistress, (?) at any rate, was not one from whom I might expect much sympathy. As Ruskin says, the "Essence of all vulgarity lies in want of sensation," and "Men are for ever vulgar precisely in proportion as they are incapable of sympathy," and Mrs. Herrington seemed to me a living example of the truth of these lines. Raised from a very inferior grade—I never quite knew what she had been, but certainly no gentlewoman—to be the wife of a man of family and position, she had been so spoilt by his foolish indulgence, and yielding to all her whims and caprices, that the one idea of her shallow nature was herself and her own ailments ! I think I never once, the whole time I was at W—, sat down to any meal, when she was present, without hearing a more or less detailed account of her aches and pains—which, to say the least, was monotonous—and unappetizing. And she seemed to resent any other conversation. If her husband, a well-read man, with whom some rational talk would have been possible, ever started any interesting topic, he was promptly quelled, so that, as a rule, he held his peace, like the wise man he was, and went back into

his study with a sigh of relief, when meals were over, leaving his wife to her sorry victory.

She was one of those incapable women, that seem, by some strange irony of Fate, to be so often placed in the most responsible positions ; and a more complete muddle than her household I could scarcely imagine. There was a perpetual ebb and flow of servants, and generally one or more short, for no servant would ever stay longer than a few months, and the unhappy governess was expected to help in supplying the place that was vacant for the time.

This was a sad interruption to lessons, still I learnt many useful things, such as plate-cleaning, bed-making, etc., of which I daresay I should be ignorant to this day, if it had not been for Mrs. Herrington's peculiarity of never giving decent wages to her servants. She was not at all singular in this respect ; I have known many like her. Women who would not hesitate to spend almost a small fortune on their own dress for instance, and yet could not be made to see that a little sacrifice of some (useless) finery would ensure so much more comfort to their unfortunate households.

But nearness often goes hand in hand with the most reckless extravagance.

And her children. . . my charges. . . Poor little things ! how my heart ached for them ! They were the most awful little story-tellers I have ever encountered ; but it was no wonder, when they had been *bullied*, (there is really no other word to express the way their mother treated them,) from their cradles upwards. They had got so accustomed to harshness and severity, that they seemed quite hardened, and there did not appear to be any way of making the least impression on them. They were like little blocks, and I felt, for a long time, perfectly hopeless ; a condition of mind which their mother, by her perpetual complaints, did not tend to cheer. But as for any thought or consideration for a *woman's* feelings, this was quite out of her line ; for she was one of those women who hate women, and not only like men, but do not scruple to say so in the presence of men. . . than which, to my mind at least, nothing could be in worse taste. We used to have arguments on the subject—(my readers will think I strangely forgot my place ! but it was my first, and I had not as yet got used to

servitude ; though certainly I must own it was no fault of Mrs. Herrington's that I forgot for one moment I was in her ("service")—with the result that she one day suddenly turned upon me with : "But I forgot ! you don't like men ! . . ." I endeavoured to explain to her that I had no objection to them —only that I did not like to hear women abused in their presence ; but I don't suppose she saw the distinction, for argument was not her forte, and who does not know the utter impossibility of holding an argument with anybody who cannot keep to the point ? . . .

One break I had in my dismal life at W—, and that was the arrival of a young girl, whose father was a great friend of Mr. Herrington's, and who sent his daughter to see if she could be of any use, in an unusually great state of muddle then existing. I used often to tell her that she was the first ray of sunshine that had shone on my dark life since I left home, and I have never forgotten her, for the delicate courtesy and consideration, with which she treated me, went to my heart, after all the rude and rough treatment I had been subjected to. She was, too, a most sympathetic listener to tales of woe ; and I fear I must have indulged her with many ; but I used to like to see her great dark eyes light up with indignation over the slights that were put upon me. She was very fond of riding, and I shall never forget the first day I saw her on horseback. Now, to see many ladies mounted is by no means a treat. Their crooked seat, their angular trot—often with a good screw on—and their canter, in direct contrast to the movement of their horse, (not to mention that some seem to imagine reins were intended as a means of support, and to be held on to ! ), are the reverse of pleasant for a lover of horses to witness. But my friend—for I may call her so—"had witchcraft in it." She "grew into her seat," and I always recall her, as I saw her that day, sitting perfectly square, shoulder to shoulder, her lithe girlish figure swaying with every movement of the restive young horse she rode, and her laughing face turned back to nod good-bye to me, as I stood at the window with the children to see her start.

Poor girl! . . . she married very soon after, and most unhappily. She was one of those natures, for whom one might almost predict such a "Baptism of Fire," for she was, without

exception, the most keenly sensitive woman I have ever met, and with that large capacity both for happiness and for suffering, which, if ever filled in this world, is so much more likely to hold sorrow than joy. I often hear from her, for we have corresponded ever since, and she has told me the history of her most unhappy marriage to a man, that, born in the upper ranks of life, had a soul only fit for the gutter, out of which she tried in vain to lift him. She lived with him a year and a half, and then, in self-defence, was obliged to leave him; and she has since told me how truly thankful she was, that she was able to get away before her little baby was injured for life, or even killed; as there seemed to be no extreme to which her husband would not proceed, if only he could torture her. . . . From such a cruel fate, may God preserve all generous-hearted girls, who marry, as she did, with no thought of self, for she never loved him (only, as she has told me, hoped she might get to like him in time, adding pitifully, "but he never gave me a chance,"), but married him because he for his own selfish ends—she had a good fortune—worked upon her sensitive and compassionate nature, and induced her, after months of persecution, to take the fatal step of marrying him solely out of pity.

I do not know how long my courage would have lasted in enduring the wearing life at W—, but after six months I fell ill, and the doctor ordered me complete rest. So, even if I had wished to remain, I should have been of no good, and Mrs. Herrington was not one to let anybody eat the bread of idleness.

So I went home to my dear mother, where I was nursed back to health with the most loving care; and it was with the greatest difficulty that, when I grew strong again, I prevailed on her to let me try my luck once more as a governess.

The next situation I took was in a doctor's family, in a small country town. There I had only two pupils, both girls, who had been always taught to look upon their governess as their friend, so that I had no opposition to encounter; and, as their mother did her best to make me feel at home, I spent three of the happiest years of my governess life under her roof.

And here I was able to resume my riding. The good doctor was one of those whose sole idea of bliss was to go straight across country behind a fox, indeed, I have often heard him say that hunting was the only thing worth living for! He

kept some excellent horses, and was kind enough often to take me out, when he rode, with one of his little girls, on his long country rounds. I do not remember when I was first on horseback, but I must have been very young, for on my sixth birthday, which I distinctly recollect, my father gave me the loveliest Shetland pony, and I could already ride then, without a leading rein. I well remember my pride, the first time I was allowed to manage my pony all by myself. From that day riding had always been my great delight. Apart from the exercise, which, to my mind, is a sovereign remedy for all the ills that "flesh is heir to," and the companionship of the horse, which, to a lover of animals, is an additional charm, one gains so much in riding in knowledge of Nature. How many of the beauties of this most beautiful world remain for ever unknown to those who do not ride! I have ridden in the early morning before the sun rose over "the misty mountain tops," and, from my saddle, have watched the shadows lengthening, and felt all around me grow still with the hush of the coming night, and I have ridden also under the stars; so that I may safely say that there is no hour in the day or night in which the sweet face of Nature, in her varied and many moods, has not been familiar to me. My sister had a horse as well as myself (my dear father never would give one of us an indulgence without giving it to the other, even though she did not appreciate it); and as she cared but little about riding, except when she was sure of spectators, (she had a beautiful figure and looked her very best on horseback, and she knew it, but never cared to "blush unseen"); I often exercised her horse for her, as well as my own, as she always preferred my riding him to one of the grooms. So that the beautiful rides I had with my dear father, through the lovely lanes and woods, are among the most sacred memories of my past life. My father had been a keen sportsman, and hunting was quite his favourite amusement, till one day the hounds were running about six miles from our home; there had been two or three good runs, short, but very quick, and some of the horses were getting rather done, when they came to a small fence. A friend of my father's, who, like him, was generally in the first flight, was just in front of him, and went at the fence first; but, unlike my father, he had a habit of checking his horse, unconsciously, I suppose, but he had not my father's fine hands, having begun to ride late in

life, and hands (like the poet !) are, I think, born, not made, and he checked his mare now. Though she was a splendid jumper, she failed to clear the fence, fell, and he was thrown violently over her head, breaking his neck in the fall. My father has often said he never could forget those moments, when he sat waiting for his friend to rise, till, at last, he went round through a gate that was close by, and saw what had happened. . . . From that day he never hunted again, though he never lost his nerve, for often in our rides we would go across country, for a change, taking anything that came in our way, but, as our time was our own, our horses were never pressed.

But I have made a long digression from my governessing . . . Who is it that says a happy people has no history ? My days went by uneventfully, and I was as happy as it was possible for me to be, away from my dear mother. My two pupils never gave me the least trouble, and I was certainly quite up to the task of educating them, for their parents, though the kindest of people, and invariably good to me, were not highly intellectual ; and such studies as we pursued were constantly interrupted by half holidays for long rides, and whole holidays for any races that took place within a radius of fifteen miles, and everywhere I was taken quite as a matter of course, and treated in every way as one of the family. And I wish I could say the same of other houses I know, where the unhappy governess is treated rudely and without consideration, by all alike—mistress, pupils and servants, and her life made a nightmare, that haunts her for years after she has left her situation. . . .

But when my pupils reached the ages of fourteen and fifteen respectively, it was thought well to let them have two or three years of school life, to rub off country angles ; so that my labour—quite one of love, for I had grown much attached to the whole family—was over, and I parted from my kind friends with every mutual expression of goodwill.

My next situation was obtained through some friends of my father's, and was in the family of a General McIntyre, then living at Lyme Regis ; and on the 15th July, (how that date lives in my memory !) I began my third and last experiences as a governess. I had not been in this most picturesque little town before, and I shall never forget my first view of it, from my window, soon after my arrival. Mrs. McIntyre's house was on

the Up-Lyme road, and the front windows looked across the bay towards Charmouth ; and I remember standing almost spell-bound before the beautiful scene. The sea, of that deep blue that, once seen, is never forgotten, lying like a lake in the hot July sunshine ; the many-coloured cliffs, (for those blue lias cliffs seem to take every variety of shade in turn, and sometimes all at once), with the great Golden Cup high over them all, extending along the coast to Portland Bill, distinctly visible on the horizon ; the rich green of the pine wood, on the road to Charmouth, and the deep cloud-shadows lying on the water. . . . I can see it all again as I write.

But, as George Eliot so finely says, “What can still that hunger of the heart, that sickens the eye for beauty, and makes sweet-scented ease an oppression ?”

Though surrounded by so much beauty, (not perhaps by much ease, sweet-scented or otherwise), I found that “hunger of the heart,” so difficult to stay, only grew by what it fed on ; for I was more unhappy here, if possible, at any rate at first, than I had been at W——. Mrs. McIntyre was one of those smooth-tongued women, who are all things to all men, and women too—to their faces, but then. . . .

Her father, Lord A., was an Irishman of good family ; but her mother (I have since met some ladies who knew her well) was the daughter of one of the fowl-keepers on his estate, whose “childher,” as she called them, (and I knew most of them, for Mrs. McIntyre had many sisters, and they used to come in detachments to stay with her), bore many marks physically, but perhaps even more mentally, of their distinguished parentage.

As for the General, he was never anything but courteous and kind to me, for he, at least, was a gentleman ; but he was one of those soft-voiced, rather silly men, who make love, in a perfectly innocent and desultory fashion, to every fairly good-looking girl they meet. He tried it with me, but I soon put a stop to it, and it was as well I did, for I should have had rather a worse time than I had, if jealousy had been added to other causes of warfare ! Jealousy of that particular kind, I mean, for Mrs. McIntyre was jealous enough of me in other ways.

For instance, she was horribly jealous of my influence over children. She was one of those people who say, and perhaps try to believe, that no one can manage their children but them-

selves ; and the absurdity of this idea, firmly implanted in the minds of persons who have not the very smallest notion of managing themselves, is too comic.

For, amiable as she was in general society, she was a very fury at home ! Her temper being so very violent at times, that her tongue (though she made good use of it, too,) did not suffice her for a weapon of attack, but she was obliged to have recourse to her hands, which, inherited from her low-born mother, were a heavy infliction indeed ! I used often to be a (most unwilling) witness to such scenes, as I never could have believed it possible to be enacted by people that had any pretensions to good breeding ; and no consideration of the discomfort caused to on-lookers had the least effect in stemming the torrent of wrath. It was indeed an unhappy home. . . . I think, that of all the trials that come to us, "like blessings in disguise," as it is said, (but ah ! how complete the disguise !), beyond all question the worst is an unhappy home. Illness, loss of friends (in what way soever, and there are worse ways than by death), losses of fortune, etc., etc., all these one may, by the mercy of God, live down in time, if one has Peace in one's own heart. But in an unhappy home, and I speak from sad experience, this is impossible. It is that perpetual *Dorn im Auge* which would mar the greatest blessings ; and to live surrounded by angry passions is like having a foretaste of the torments of Hell.

My readers will wonder why I stayed ; but I soon grew much attached to the children, and I was sorry for them, for such an atmosphere as that of their home would have been enough to ruin the finest natures ; and they, two of them especially, had characters that must have come to them as a legacy from some far-off ancestor, I should think ; certainly they did not inherit them from their parents, whose minds, though in very different ways, were about equally shallow. The eldest girl, particularly, was a remarkably intelligent and thoughtful child ; and used sometimes to quite startle me by questions that revealed a most unexpected depth of thought in one so young. If she had lived, she would, I should say, have left her mark in the world ; but she died, about two years after I left, of decline, the consequence of a neglected cold. If ever any of them reach womanhood, (I have heard nothing of them lately,) it will be a wonder, and certainly no fault of their mother's, for a more insane system of

alternate coddling and utter neglect, than seemed to be the rule in her house, I have seldom witnessed. As a lady once said to me of Mrs. McIntyre: "She does not give her poor children a chance."

So I stayed on for the "poor children's" sake, and, if I did them some little good, in the eighteen months I was with them, I was well rewarded, for they grew deeply attached to me, and love, in any shape or form, tends always to make smooth the rough ways of life, for love is a mighty lever, and moves heavier things than the world. . . . .

And if I was not altogether happy, for I am one of those individuals to whom peace is an essential to happiness, I grew, in time, fairly reconciled to my lot; and the daily improvement in the children made up to me, in great measure, for all the discomfort I endured in their behalf.

And, after all, Lyme, though the scene of so much suffering, yet holds the brightest recollection of my life, for it was here that "Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands," and from that hour the moments were golden indeed! In other words, it was here that I first met Hilbert, and the day he told me he loved me, all my troubles took to themselves wings, and I have never seen them since.

## A Little Walk in Hampshire.

By JAMES BAKER, F.R.G.S.,

Author of "John Westacott," "By the Western Sea," etc., etc.

THE south and east of England do not yield such rich varied beauty to the tourist as do the hilly north, or sea-coast, combe-indented western counties; but Hampshire boasts of a peculiar beauty of its own, and in historic and literary memories few counties can surpass it.

We commenced our little walk at the small town of Basingstoke, leaving old Basing House and all its famous Cromwellian memories for the nonce; but ere we started forth to walk on to Sherfield on Loddon, passing up to the cemetery that, though now a modern cemetery with church and chapel edifices, has been a burying-place far back before the Holy Ghost Chapel was built upon this rising ground. Now, this chapel is a picturesque, ivy-covered ruin, just leaving enough of its window tracery to prove its architecture, built by Henry VIII. and restored by Philip and Mary, it forms an interesting feature amidst the modern tombs that rise all around it.

But Basingstoke was our starting point, and not our halting place, so onward we went over the railway bridge out on the good gravel road that leads northward. Very rich was the country around and well wooded. The cornfields, now a ruddy yellow, contrasted with the deep, distant purple of forest and upland. No stiff hills as in the west country try the lungs of the pedestrian; but the road rises and falls, giving change to the view and, by its undulations, rest to the limbs. As we reached the long, scattered village of Sherfield, pronounced by a tramp of whom we inquired, "Sheffield," an iron sign on an upright pole bore the arms of the Le Fevre family, with the motto, *Sans changer*. And truly, in these villages naught changes from generation to generation. How curiously appropriate would such a sign be to greet some wanderer who, after a lifetime of chequered years, should once again visit the scene perchance of

his birth. And yet some little change had been wrought in the village. The church had lately been rebuilt, and some of the great elms that sheltered the walk across the field from highway to churchyard had suffered by storm and tempest.

The church is of flint architecture and of the Early English style. At the west end is a calm, pretty pond, all sheltered and shadowed by elm and oak ; and all around the glistening or dark water, over which the swallows skim, are reed weeds and flowering plants. The scene around is wholly pastoral, of corn and root fields, and clumps of trees ; and all sounds are but those of hum of insects and chirp of birds. On this summer day, when light clouds but intensify the blue of the soft sky, all speaks of happy life, save the white tombstones around one, and the silent old dial that stands by the southern door, ever marking time's onward steps.

To those interested in curious names, that of "Christian," for a woman, followed by, "Wife of William Wigg," is perhaps worth noting ; and the last line in an epitaph to Mary Chase, makes it worth recording :

" Here innocence with beauty lies,  
Consigned from earth to kindred skies ;  
Short was her life, her death severe,  
Reader reflect . . . . but spare the tear."

The interior of the church has been wholly restored and all antiquity swept away, except one brass, to a Stephen Hardnell, who died in 1590. This brass proves that there was probably more of interest in the church, which has been destroyed. There are some fair modern mosaics over the communion table, and all in the church is neat and well kept ; without fripperies, but with a tender respect for God's house.

The walk from this church on to the wide common of the village is very lovely, along a good road under the wide-spreading oaks that stretch out beyond the wooden park palings.

The village clustered round the open expanse of common is excessively picturesque. Deep red and yellow cottages half hid amid trees, and horses and geese browsing and plucking the grass, some of the latter lazily floating on the waters of a pond that reflect the beauties of the weeping willows by its side. An old triple-gabled, red farm house, stands hard by, and just

beyond is the rounded bow window of the "White Hart," where at least some bread and cheese and perchance some salad can be procured.

At such an inn in France, Belgium or Germany an omelette or cutlet might safely be demanded ; but in England country inns rarely get beyond bread and cheese.

Our way lay on from here over a bridge beneath which slowly moved onward the sluggish Lodden, that we were to meet again at Stratfield Saye, and when, after passing this, we arrived at a finger post with, inscribed on it, "To Rotherick," we left the main road and passing a cottage that was all surrounded with bright flowers, stocks and tiger lilies and such like sweet smelling or brilliant blossoms. We went on down this by way to look at one of the most secluded villages perhaps in all England. Hartley Waspil, this village is called in an old County History ; but modern spelling renders it Wespall.

A thick wood surrounds a rushy, marshy bit of common land, close to which are some of the first cottages of Hartley, all rich with many flowers. As we pass on the oaks overspread the smooth, gravelly road, and the bells of Hartley Church strike out as though to greet that returning wanderer, who had noted the motto of *Sans changer* at Sherfield. The rich scent of the woodland pervades the warm summer air, and increases as the wood thickens, until we emerge upon a wide, triangular-shaped bit of common land, half-sheltered even in its openness by isolated or clumped oak trees. On the left stands a tiny cot, with the words "Post office" printed upon it, and away beyond on the other side of the open glade is yet another larger cottage picturesque with flowers and creeper-covered porch ; and to the left of this, nearly hid by the oaks around it, is dimly seen a square, well-built little school, with a small bell-cote at one end. A pond glistens beneath the trees, and some ducks are picking about at its borders, and this is the centre of the village life of Hartley. Some of the dwellers in these cottages have looked out upon this open, yet tree-dotted glade, all surrounded by thick woods, for over sixty summers ; looking upon a scene of extreme sylvan beauty but of intense quietude.

The little church of Hartley lies up on the hill-slope, scarcely hidden amid the trees as the school-house, but yet tree-sheltered. Its western wall, with dark timber balks formed into semicircular

patterns, tells of its former architecture. Built, asserted the Rector, in the Edwardian period, it was originally a timber structure, and within are still in good condition the timber pillars with carved capitals, and a good open timber roof; and traces are seen of the timber braces within its restored now flint walls. From this woodland church a walk across the fields leads up past the Rectory, again on to the main road, and though no public-house or inn is to be found within the boundary of the village, yet here, close to the Rectory-gates, rises the sign of a house of entertainment. The late rector of the parish was the Rev. Dr. Keate, of Eton memory; and his son now holds the living. A curious contrast from the great school of Eton to this tiny forest school of Hartley.

It is but a short walk from this secluded village to one of the renowned spots in England, and a pleasant road leads to that spot. If Stratfield Turges is reached in the evening, a comfortable inn will give quarters until the next morning, and few pleasanter things can be done than to quietly stroll up the avenue of oaks in the lessening twilight, with the scent of the hay around one, and to halt under a spreading cedar that faces the end of the avenue, and from there get a first view of Stratfield Saye, the house of the Iron Duke. This cedar was, as an inscription upon it sets forth, brought by the Iron Duke to Stratfield in his carriage in 1817. It must have then been a sapling, and the seventy-two years of growth have made it a grand cedar, though it has been shorn of some of its beauty by storm and wind.

The road winds round from this cedar to the left, crosses over a high-pitched bridge, and leads us to the curious, but not pretty church, built in the form of a Greek cross, with a domed central tower; its arms are in form much like the third century church of St. Jean, at Poitiers. From this church a path leads to the house past some magnificent oaks, then on to the lawn that is shrouded by mighty elms, and the house beyond is nearly hid by outspreading dark yews. The house is hardly noteworthy for its architecture, but the interior possesses much interest from its association with the hero of Waterloo.

The hall has a wooden gallery running round it, and it is ornamented with stags' heads and horns, and faintly recalls, on a very small scale, the mighty hall of Prince Schwarzenberg, at

Frauenburg in Bohemia ; but the pictures are interesting. One represents Wellington being guided by peasantry over the Pyrenees, another, smaller one, is Wellington's triumphal entry into Madrid, the ladies of that city throwing down mantillas and shawls to form a footway for his charger. Busts of Scott, Blücher, and the Emperor Nicholas give lightness to the rather sombre furniture of this hall.

In the library is a most striking portrait of Napoleon, a picture that forces one to look upon it and dwell upon it, and learn somewhat of the influence this man had over his army and his country, and how he could flatter a friend whilst secretly betraying him. There is also a portrait of the Duke when about forty, a portrait betraying the masterly power and determination of the man. This and the adjoining room were formerly the Duke's bedroom and sitting-room. The sitting-room especially having a pleasant look-out on the lawn.

We fell into chat with an old dame in a cottage on the estate, who had lived with the Duke, and it was interesting to hear her speak of the man who saved Europe from a "one man's" tyrannical rule.

"He was a very particular gentleman, he was," she exclaimed when explaining that some spoke evil of him because of the wars. "Some say he was cruel," she added, "but I never heard no harm of him here, oh no, he lived very plainly and was up betimes," and then the old dame told the oft-told story of the small bedstead that the Duke slept in, in the room we were visiting. "A lady," she said, "particularly asked him to show her his bedroom and he did so. On seeing the smallness of the bed the lady cried out: 'But how small! there is no room to turn!' 'Turn?' answered the Duke, 'when you want to turn, it's time to turn out.'" As we chatted on about the Duke and his successors and the changes that had been made, and the monument that had been erected to his memory, the old dame sorted the two successors of the Iron Duke from their mighty predecessor by referring to him as "He that's up there," referring not to above the skies, where all good men go; but to the top of the monument where the Duke in bronze ever stands.

But we had not yet seen this statue, and we must go back to our visit to the house. Two pictures that will interest many are those of the famous chestnut horse Copenhagen, that carried

Wellington for eighteen hours at the battle of Waterloo ; he is buried in the grounds hard by.

The sight of Wellington's entry into Madrid made us enquire if there were no Spanish pictures in the house ; and we were shown in another room a series of Royal Spanish portraits. The Infanta Maria, Reyne Isabella, Philip, and others. The decoration of the walls of one of the drawing-rooms is worthy of note. The whole wall is covered with engravings and around these engravings has been run a gilt beadwork, and the spaces between filled in with plain gold. The whole effect is curious and agreeable, though some of the engravings have suffered much from damp and neglect in former years.

The road from the house to the monument is through a magnificent avenue of elms. The oak avenue from Stratfield Turges is very noteworthy for the size and beauty of the oaks, and this elm avenue is as beautiful. The avenue ends at a gateway, and then a road leading between two lines of yews trends up to the double lodge, in front of which stands the tall granite pillar with Corinthian capital above which "he that's up there" stands. With right hand on hip and hat in left hand, looking out eastward, away towards that awful field where friend and foe were in one red burial blent, from whence Wellington returned with the reins of Europe in his hands.

A level wild spot this monument overlooks, all around no house is seen save the little lodges ; but beneath is flowering purple heath, and clustering groups of firs, and graceful ferns. A glorious bit of road leads on across this heath ; where the red trunks of the firs contrast so beautifully with their dusky boughs and the ferns and heath beneath.

After leaving this wild open heath the road descends a steep tree-sheltered hill, and passes a lodge gate on the left a little beyond. An inn, the " Hatch Gate " is on the right, and then again a pleasantbit of open common ground, and a walk on the green sward beneath spreading oak trees varies the scene ; but ere long two cottages are reached on the right-hand side, and a road by these, turning sharply to the right, leads up to a gateway and a long avenue ; and when this avenue is left a large pond gives a freshness to the scene, just where a great expanse of view opens out away to the south and south-west.

The famous house of Bramshill is now seen on the right, and

the gateway of Jacobean work with two niches with seats therein is passed, and then the full burst of the south front opens out. It is a magnificent Tudoresque mansion, partly of brick and partly of stone: two wings flank the main front, the Perpendicular windows of which are of stone. The view from the terraces that are enclosed with low open balustrades is full of beauty. Just such a sweeping, undulating country, all varied in tone and colour, as Cyril Lawson loved to paint. The "bleak barren plain" in which it was said to have been built, has become a rich, fertile upland of corn, and fruit, and root crop, and woodland and rich green sward; with here and there patches of the purple heather to remind one of the wide heath we have passed over.

Built in the time of James I., it still stands unaltered as built, and the gardens and walks around it are quaint and charming. Guide books give its history, but the local peasants tell you it was here that the terrible game of hide and seek was played that ended in the sad tragedy, faithfully set out in the song of "The Mistletoe Bough." How far their tradition is true we could not verify.

A historic homicide was enacted in the park, for here Archbishop Abbot shot the keeper, who bled to death in an hour. The archbishop doing penance annually for his fatal mishap.

We had yet one more spot deep with interest to visit 'ere our little walk in the royal country was over.

Leaving Bramshill, we passed through the park under the shadow of giant Wellingtonias, and cedars, and mighty Scotch firs, through which the wind sighed and seethed like the sighing of the sea, and as only it sighs amidst fir trees.

For some two miles this walk lasted, until we came to a keeper's cottage, and emerged from the park into a lane; and soon, just ahead, we saw peeping up between the trees, rising from a little combe, the red pinnacles and square tower of Eversley Church. The tomb of Charles Kingsley was the goal of our pilgrimage, for we wished to stand in the little church where for so many years he taught the people, and to look upon the little house from whence also he had most truly taught "the people," not of his village, or of his parish, but of the world.

With quickened steps, and mind filled with memories of Alton Locke of Tregarva, of Hereward, of Tom Thurnall, and

Amyas Leigh, and of fair, sad Hypatia, onward we went, until the sweet flowers around the low-roofed vicarage arrested our steps, that we might dwell for a moment on the first sight of Kingsley's home. Then quietly we passed around to the front of the house, where a lawn led up from two bay windows to a rustic seat beneath fine spreading Scotch firs. The church's red walls were beyond the lawn, and its tower overlooked, but did not overshadow it. Here, in his lifetime, the true English nobleman had lived and worked for more than thirty years; secluded apparently from the world, for no other house was in sight, and no sound broke the stillness of the summer air save the twitter of a bird; and yet how fully was he in touch with, and moulding from this quiet spot many a mind, that in its turn would influence the world. A true man's memory makes holy his dwelling-place, and few men in life and work were truer than he whose home we left lingering over, to pass into the church-yard, down between the lines of conical yews, and instinctively across the grass to the left amidst other tombs to the white passion-flower entwined cross that marks his tomb.

"God is love," runs round the circle that embraces the cross. The Latin inscription at the foot is nearly hid by the grass and well it is so, for Kingsley ever spoke in Saxon and to all men, reserving his scholarship sometimes for enforcement of his words to those whom he knew would comprehend him.

Just beneath the wall of the garden where he lived and worked he lies, and as we stood in reverence at his grave, the hot sun was shielded from it by an outstretching bough of the great Scotch fir, that seemed lovingly to have reached forth from above the garden seat and spread its shade over the grave where he now lay. But the rising morning sun would shine full on the grave and light up the words: "Charles Kingsley, January 23, 1875."

The church contains not much of interest, beyond the fact that he preached there; but within the curious rood screen is a good marble monument to Dame Marianne Cope, and the font at the west end of plain granite has been placed there to Kingsley's memory; but here the mistake has been made that the inscription is in Latin, and so useless to the village lads and children, who otherwise might learn how a good man was beloved and revered.

We found there was one other house near, upon the other side of the church, where a cup of milk and a rest sent us forth refreshed for a yet further stretch of interesting country of moor and heath, hamlet and village, until the long commons of Hartley Row and Hartley Wintney told us we were nearing Winchfield, the end of our walk.

But really Eversley had been the culminating point of interest in that walk, and as we looked back upon the scenes of ruined church and baronial hall, village green and open moorland, the home of England's greatest warrior, and the house and tomb of one of her truest men, and noblest authors, we felt that our little walk had embraced a very epitome of much that is great and good in "this sceptred isle."

"This blessed spot, this earth, this realm, this England."

## **A Lover's Secret.**

BY MRS. LOVETT CAMERON,

Author of "In a Grass Country," "A Devout Lover," "A Lost Wife,"  
"This Wicked World," Etc.

### **CHAPTER XXIV.**

#### **FRIENDLESS AND HOMELESS.**

Alone!—that worn-out word  
 So idly spoken and so coldly heard;  
 Yet all that poets sing and grief hath known  
 Of hopes laid waste, knells in that word—Alone!

—BULWER LYTTON.

"BUT for you she would not have died!"

"For me!—Oh, Aunt Durham, you are indeed cruel and unjust."

"I am not unjust, what I say is truth. Do not stand crying there. Listen to me, it is that child who brought the infection into the house, and who gave it to her. Now I find out from the servants that, to satisfy you, she nursed him in her own room. She sacrificed her life—the life that I valued and loved—in order to nurse that wretched child! It were better far if he had died, and she had lived."

The blinds were drawn closely down over the windows, and in the twilight greyness of the darkened room, the two women could scarcely discern each other's faces.

It was the first time that Miss Durham had spoken to her great-niece since their common sorrow, and Aunt Margaret was still lying upstairs in her flower-strewn coffin, with the cold sweet smile of Eternity upon her face.

It was the day before the funeral, and Miss Durham had bidden Wilson to summon Madge into her presence.

She rose from her deep chair at her entrance and stood facing her, gaunt and lean and awful in her grief and anger.

All the misfortune which had fallen upon her seemed to have come to her through her younger niece. She had never loved

her as she had loved the other, because she had never succeeded in subduing her to her own imperious fancies. Now she was determined to set things upon a different footing. Aunt Margaret had been too tender-hearted, and had spoilt the child by over-indulgence, but there should be no more spoiling now.

If Madge was to be her heiress and become mistress of Fairmead Hall at her death, she must conform to her system of life. Aunt Durham knew certain details about Madge's past, which gave her an insight into a great many things which had never been mentioned between them. For the honour of her own name, she had no wish to drag her hidden secrets into the light of day. Let them by all means be ignored and forgotten. She had no wish to brand the girl with shame, or to publish a scandal to the whole country side. But then she must be submissive and bow to the conditions which she saw fit to impose upon her.

Margaret's death had been a rude shock to the old woman, and she had blamed herself in that, by deviating ever so little from her established principles, she had in a measure opened the way for the disaster which had overtaken her.

There must be no more of yielding and indulgence. Madge must be broken upon the wheel of her will, as her poor aunt had been before her.

"I did wrong in permitting that boy to live in the house," said Aunt Durham to herself when she thought it over, "if he had been a girl it would not have mattered, but no sooner do women admit a male creature into the inner circle of their lives than mischief and sorrow follow of themselves. Look at the harm this boy has already done to me!—but for him Margaret would have been alive."

Then she had sent for her great-niece in order to speak her mind to her.

"Listen to me, Madge. I do not wish to be unduly hard upon you for the past. All that I desire is that we should understand one another for the future. By the lamentable death of your dear Aunt you will see that you are now my sole heiress. The house and estate, together with my savings, which are considerable, which I had left in my will to your Aunt for her life to devolve if she thought fit upon you in your turn, will now come entirely to you upon my death."

"You are very good to me, Aunt," murmured Madge humbly.

"As to being good, it remains to be seen whether you will think so when I have explained to you all my views. But at any rate that is what is my present intention concerning my property. It is indeed a bitter grief to me that it is impossible that the old prophecy relating to the 'Three Maids of Fairmead' can now be carried out in this generation. I had hoped that I had lived to see its fulfilment, but alas—it was not to be! It may be that it is reserved for you to discover a third maiden of our family to whom you will be able to bequeath the inheritance which I shall leave you, carefully tied up so that you may not squander it. I must study the old family papers to see if I can find any new guidance under these altered circumstances."

Madge again murmured her thanks. A sense of gratitude came to her. Johnny's future at any rate was safe.

"Of course," continued the old lady after a brief pause, "of course you will never marry, that is naturally the primary condition I shall lay down to your becoming my heiress."

Madge started—in the dim light she hoped her aunt would not see the sudden flush that sprang into her face.

"I am never likely to marry," she answered in a low voice.

"No, of course not. But there is another stipulation which I must make, and which it is my intention to carry out at once. I am an old woman, Madge, in the course of nature it will not be very long before you will come into my place. Before I die I desire to set my house in order. That boy must be sent away."

"The boy! Oh, no—impossible—you cannot mean it!" the words were almost a cry. She clasped her hands entreatingly, her eyes grew wild with terror, her heart beat violently.

"Pray calm yourself, Madge, there is nothing to get excited about. The boy has been a little amusement to you, I know, and you are fond of him; but I did foolishly in allowing you and poor Margaret to keep him in the house, and you see we have lived to regret it, for it is owing to him that this terrible affliction has befallen us. In any case I never intended that he should live here always, and the time has come when I have determined to send him away."

With a cry of despair Madge fell upon her knees before her, clutching at her crape-covered skirts with her trembling hands.

"Oh no, Aunt, do not send him away. I cannot—cannot lose

him. I do not want your money—leave it to whom you like—and I will work for you like a servant day and night—the child shall never come near you or trouble you since you dislike him so—only for pity's sake let me keep him."

"Get up, Madge, and don't make yourself ridiculous by this theatrical exhibition," said the old woman sternly. "I don't want to leave my money to anyone but to you, and I don't want you to work like a servant, I have plenty of servants—and as to disliking poor little Johnny, of course I don't dislike him at all!—poor little brat, why should I? He is a nice little boy, and of course I mean to provide for his future. There is an establishment for orphan boys at Birmingham, to which I am going to send him. When he is old enough, he will be apprenticed to a trade, and taught to earn his living, and I shall pay twenty pounds a year for his support until he is old enough to do so. I have had very nice letters about the place from the chaplain, and on Thursday next I intend to send Wilson with him to Birmingham, and he will deliver him safely up to the matron at the Home. He will be as happy as possible there."

"Aunt Durham, I entreat, I implore you not to take him from me!—it will kill me—he is all I have to live for—I cannot, I will not be parted from him. Where he goes I must go too!"

"Do not be ridiculous, Madge! and get up from your knees!"

Madge rose slowly and wearily, her face was wet with tears, her bright hair was rough and disordered, her tottering limbs seemed scarcely able to support her. She sank despairingly into a chair.

"You talk great nonsense, my dear," continued Aunt Durham, not unkindly. "I am scarcely able to send you to a home for orphan boys with him, I suppose!"

"Oh, do not send him away, or else give me the twenty pounds you have promised, and I will go and live in some town where I can work for my living and support him."

"Madge, you are very silly. A Miss Durham of Fairmead does not work for her bread like a seamstress. You must know that you are talking wildly. Say no more about it, I have determined that the child must go——"

"But he shall not go!" she cried wildly. "You have no right to him—it is I who have a right—it is I——"

"Hush Madge!" interrupted Miss Durham, sternly. "Do not

speak words of shame and disgrace, which you would for ever repent of! Let it be enough for you that I *know* your secret——”

“*You know——?*” she repeated faintly.

“I know this much, my dear—that in spite of all my care and all my training, you once so far forgot your womanhood as to encourage the vile attentions of a wicked and profligate man. I do not wish to drag your degradation into the light of day. I will not blight your name nor will I bring shame upon you, for there are some things which it is best to be silent about, and I believe that you have suffered enough already. You have learnt for yourself the lesson which I strove in vain to teach you. You have seen what the love of man does for a woman. How he seeks his own evil gratification only, how he deceives and betrays the foolish creature who trusts in him, and how in the end he leaves her to bear the consequences of her folly in a life-long remorse and humiliation.”

Madge had fallen forward across the sofa, burying her face amongst the cushions. Why, oh why, was she powerless to refute these cruel accusations? Why could she not rise up and say “It is false—there is neither shame nor disgrace—he was my husband and I was his wife, and there is no disgrace in married love!” But alas! that letter in which he had resigned her for another hung ever before her eyes like the sword of fate betwixt her and the truth—and the conviction that he had tricked her into a marriage which was no marriage at all, sealed her lips through her love for him, lest she should be the means of his destruction.

She could answer nothing. She could only suffer and be silent; and Aunt Margaret, who alone had known all, and had believed in her, was no longer there to stand by her and advise her.

In an anguish of self-abasement she listened to her aunt's cruel words of defamation, and yet was powerless to deny them or to defend herself. There was no excuse, no explanation possible to her. The fate that had overtaken her was strong as death and cruel as the grave. There was no struggling against it. Jack Ludlow had indeed deserted and forsaken her, and in the face of that stupendous fact, nothing that she could say or do seemed to be of use. Only she wondered vaguely even in that

hour of misery how and where Aunt Durham had learnt all this. Who had told her? Where had she gathered all her information? What had opened her eyes to the summer tragedy of her life, to which she had been so blindly unconscious four years ago?

It was a mystery which she could not fathom.

"There is only one indulgence which I will extend to you, Madge," resumed Miss Durham after a pause, "and it is the last that you must ever expect of me. As I know you are fond of this poor little boy, who remember is *never* to be spoken about between us in future, and who is no relation to us at all, only a waif whom your aunt was kind enough to support out of charity—remember this! Well then I will give you one little pleasure. As I daresay you will like to see the place he is going to, and to talk to the Matron about his little childish ailments, you shall take him yourself to Birmingham instead of Wilson."

Madge looked up quickly, a new thought awoke suddenly in her mind.

"I will give you the first quarter's money to pay in to the Secretary, and you will take a return ticket and come back again the same evening—you must, of course, take one of the maids with you, and you must go on Thursday because I have arranged that he is to be received at the Home that day. Would you like to do this, Madge?"

"Yes, Aunt," she answered quietly, but her heart was beating wildly.

"You will have to change at the Junction and get into the Birmingham train, you will have no other change. I will make out your journey for you. And you may take all little Johnny's clothes and toys with him, he may as well have them, and some cakes and jam too, so you can pack a good box-full of things for him. I am glad to see that you are ready to meet me half way, Madge, and I hope there will be no more rebellion in your heart against my wishes."

Drawing the girl's pale face towards her she kissed her coldly on her forehead, and dismissed her.

"I have managed her beautifully, I consider," said the old woman to herself after Madge had gone away. "It was a good move letting her perceive that I guessed her secret—it frightened her. It is certainly true, and I have pieced all the ends of the

story together correctly. Those young men on the river that summer—the letters that used to come for her—and then the mysterious appearance of the child ; oh, it is all plain enough, and terrible enough too, but these things are always the man's fault more than the woman's, and I consider that not even my poor lost Margaret herself could have dealt more leniently with her or have won her over more kindly to my wishes, than I have done."

But, clever as she thought herself, there was one thing concerning which old Miss Durham was in an outer darkness of total and utter ignorance.

For she did not understand the instincts of a mother's heart ! She did not know that the maternal element will be stronger than all else in her—that it will teach her to do and to dare that which without it would be beyond her powers ; that her love will over-ride all difficulties and brave all dangers, and that there will be no course too intricate or too perilous for her to embark upon, so long as her child's welfare and benefit depends upon it.

The moment Madge left her aunt's presence she had made up her mind that that journey to Birmingham with her boy, should be her golden opportunity of saving him.

She was almost happy indeed, when she thought how easily Aunt Durham had played into her hands and had given her the power of escaping from her with him. The only thing that troubled her was the money. She did not like to take five pounds given to her to pay to the Matron of the Home at Birmingham, and to spend it in another way. It seemed dishonest. Still she comforted herself by thinking that she would certainly pay it back some day.

She went to her room and with her own hands packed a large box, full of her own and the child's things—clothes enough to last them both for a year.

During the day her heart often failed her, her project seemed to be so vast and her own capacity for facing the world so small. How was she to set about this great thing which she was going to do ? How was she to understand what would be best for her to embark upon, and what was the first step that she must take ?

She remembered that she was not only young in years, but

also terribly young in her ignorance and her inexperience. The peaceful and easy training of her life had not taught her how to grapple with want and necessity—she who had never since her childhood even seen a large city, who had always been accustomed to the simplicity and peace of a country home—how was she to face, alone and unaided, all the unknown perils and dangers of a crowded Metropolis? She did not even remember, save in some vague dreams of her early childhood before her parents' death, what the streets of London looked like ; and yet it was amongst them that she was prepared to launch the frail bark of her fate.

If only Aunt Margaret had been alive to help and to advise her! But Aunt Margaret was dead, and she had no friend—not one!

Then all at once a sudden memory returned to her.

No friend? — yes surely there was one! One who long ago had been kind to her, who had looked unspoken love for her out of eyes that were neither handsome nor romantic, but that had surely been honest and true eyes all the same. She remembered Lance Parker, remembered that she had promised if ever she were in need to come to him, and that he had said he would always be her friend !

Well, her need was sore enough now, and the time was come when he could indeed help her if he would.

He would be able to give her a start, no doubt, would put her in the way of earning a living, and tell her where she might safely go for shelter and for food.

No sooner had she thought of him than she felt a great sense of relief and an infinite trust in him. He would not fail her! Other men might, as Aunt Durham said, be cruel and deceitful, but surely Lance Parker was honest and true.

She found the little card he had given her long ago lying at the bottom of her dressing-case, where she had placed it at the time. And she wrote at once to the address upon it and slipped out when it got dark to post it herself in the village post-box.

After that she was happier, and no sooner was the sad day of the funeral over than she quickly completed her preparations for flight.

Luckily for her, the housemaid whom her Aunt had decided

was to go with her to Birmingham, was a young woman whose private history was well-known to Madge.

Jane had a lover, and that lover was employed in a saw-mill close to Fairley Junction. Jane was easily persuaded that to spend the day at the Junction with her young man—who could without much difficulty, she thought, get a half-holiday for the occasion—would be far more amusing than to accompany her young mistress to Birmingham and back.

"I shall not want you in Birmingham at all, Jane," said Madge to her when she made the welcome proposal to her, "and you can meet me at the Junction in the evening and return home with me. It must be a little secret between us, and I daresay your William will be delighted to see you."

"I am sure, Miss, I don't know how ever to thank you enough. Miss Durham never will let my young man come to see me—he will be so pleased! for you know, Miss, for all that Miss Durham tells us the men are so wicked and girls had better not keep company and are very silly ever to marry, I have quite made my mind up to get married next year, when William expects to get his wages raised."

"Quite right, Jane, and I hope that you will be very happy," and then from her slender store she gave the girl a sovereign and bade her put it into her money-box to help to buy her wedding gown.

Two days later, an afternoon train came steaming slowly into Paddington Station, bearing amongst its third-class passengers a timid and very anxious-looking young lady, and a little white-faced and brown-eyed boy.

As the train drew up she looked out eagerly along the platform—there was a crowd of people, a great many porters hurrying along by the carriage doors, and a tangled background of cabs and carriages amongst which she could distinguish nothing clearly.

She got out of the train, holding the little boy by the hand, and looked uncertainly about her. No one came forward to meet her, no well-remembered portly form shouldered its way amongst the crowd, no freckled red face welcomed her with a beaming smile.

"He will be here presently," she said to herself, "he is sure to come, he cannot fail me!"

But the crowd dispersed, and the cabs laden with luggage drove noisily away, and still he did not come.

"Shall I put your box on a cab, Miss?" enquired the porter who had gone to find her luggage for her.

She assented mutely, but still she waited. Johnny was tired and hungry and began to cry—the platform was empty. She could not wait any longer.

At last she got into the cab.

"Where to, Miss?" said the porter, touching his cap at the window as he slammed the rickety door upon her.

"I do not know. Tell him to drive on," she answered miserably.

She was alone in the world.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### AN EVENTFUL MEETING.

Perhaps it is pretty to force together  
Thoughts so all unlike each other,  
'To mutter and mock a broken charm.'

—COLE RIDGE.

THURSDAY was market-day in the town of Northminster; and on market day—no less to see one-another and to gossip than to make their purchases—the squires and squiresesses of the neighbourhood were wont to drive into the town from all directions, to put up their family coaches and horses at the Royal George Hostelry, and to spread themselves over the principal streets of the town, frequently with no other object save to meet their friends, and pick up any odds and ends of gossip that might be flying about.

A great central meeting-place on these occasions, was Mr. Jakes, the librarian's, shop. Jakes's commanded a fine view of the square market-place, being situated at the north-east corner thereof, looking across the old fountain in the centre surmounted with its cross in antique iron work, to the Town Hall, with its picturesquely-gabled roof and handsome clock tower, which occupied the whole of its southern side.

People made *rendezvous* of all kinds at Jakes's. Servants were interviewed in the little back room behind the shop, parcels were

left to be called for, letters and telegrams were taken in and kept, till their owners came to ask for them, and all day long Mr. Jakes himself, stood bowing and smiling, and washing his thin white hands with invisible soap behind the counter. Mr. Jakes was a venerable old gentleman, with snow-white hair and an aristocratic cast of countenance ; he was a man of some amount of literary knowledge ; he could recommend you which books to read, and tell you which were not worth reading, in his library : it was popularly supposed that he read them all himself. Anyhow, he pretended to know all about them. Nobody looked upon him in the light of an ordinary tradesman. He rather resembled a universal friend and adviser ; he remembered the births of most of the people who came into his shop, knew all about the marriages of their sons and daughters, recollected many of the old families who had been swept away and forgotten out of the old country houses, and could have told you the exact origin of those who had risen in the world, upon the ruins of their predecessors. Everybody went to Jakes for advice and assistance ; from a boy in buttons to a pair of carriage horses, from an Angola kitten to a high-class governess, he always knew where to lay his hand exactly upon the very thing that his enquirer was looking for. Nothing was too exalted for his mind to grasp, nothing too small to rivet his conscientious attention.

Mr. Jakes did not come much into the shop on ordinary days, he was too great a man for that ; he usually sat in a private room of his own, where, however, anybody was free to come and consult him ; but on market-day he conceived it to be his duty to preside himself over his shop-people, and to be there to give a smile and a bow to all who entered.

Everybody turned in to have a chat with old Jakes, and from Lord Castlemere himself down to farmer Hoggins in his leathern breeches and gaiters, he had a kindly word and a pleasant greeting for all.

One Thursday afternoon, Jakes, as usual, was in the shop, and a crowd of persons were coming and going through the open doorway.

It was "Oh, Mr. Jakes, might I leave this parcel ?" or "They are going to send some boots for me from Read's, would you let them stop here till the carriage calls, Mr. Jakes?" or "There will be a young woman to see me about the kitchen-maid's

place, will you let her wait in the back parlour till I come back, Mr. Jakes?"

And to everything Jakes bowed and smiled and washed his hands, and answered, "Certainly, ma'am—Certainly, sir."

Presently in came Lady Mary Ludlow into the shop, and Jakes bowed lower than ever, and smiled with genuine pleasure at the sight of her.

"Delighted indeed to see you at home again, my lady."

"And so am I glad to be back, Mr. Jakes," and Lady Mary reached out her slender grey-gloved hand across the counter and shook hands heartily with the old man, who flushed with pleasure at the attention. "There is no place like home after all, and no faces like the old ones one has known all one's life," she added kindly.

"That's quite my opinion too, my lady. No place like old England! But if I might make so bold as to say it, your stay in foreign parts has done you a world of good—you are looking wonderful well, my lady."

"I am very well, thank you, Mr. Jakes."

"And young Mr. Ludlow?"

"He is quite well. He will be here in a minute to pay his respects to you; he is looking up all his old friends, I left him at the Bank talking to Mr. Scrivener five minutes ago—he was to follow me here."

Jakes came round the counter to place a chair in a comfortable position for Lady Mary, and she was just beginning to tell him how he really must find a better cook for Lord Castlemere as well as another footman and an under-housemaid, and Jakes, with his hands folded together midway between his chin and his waistcoat, was listening, with his bald head bent into an attitude of the deepest attention and interest, when a phaeton and a smart pair of cobs dashed noisily up to the door, and a moment later a tall and regally handsome young lady, clad in pale blue muslin, came out of the sunshine without into the dim coolness of the shop.

Lady Mary saw her before she was seen by her and gave a little start, half turning her head away, and pretending to examine some pocket-books which lay on the counter.

"Good morning, Mr. Jakes," said the new-comer carelessly, "rather cooler than it was last market day, isn't it?"

"Yes, Miss Verinder, those two days of rain has cooled the air wonderful—the heat was most oppressive last week."

"Have you got that new book of Ouida's for me yet, Mr. Jakes?"

"I am expecting it from town to-night, Miss, and I'll send it over to Deep Deane at once. I hope Sir Herbert is well? I haven't forgotten that edition of Livy he asked me to try and get for him—would you mind telling him, Miss, that I've great hopes I shall succeed in getting what he wants in a short time?"

Agnes, who was turning over the leaves of an illustrated album, nodded carelessly. She did not care a brass farthing about the Livy, or about any of her father's wants, and scarcely heard the message that Jakes wished her to give him.

"What is the price of this album, Mr. Jakes?" she said, cutting short his remarks somewhat abruptly, and then, turning round with the book in her hand, she became suddenly aware of the presence of Lady Mary Ludlow.

The two women looked at each other. For a moment the elder could not bring herself to say a word. Here was the girl who had ill-treated her son—how was it possible that she could look at her without resentment? But then common sense stepped in, and she remembered that, in spite of her conduct, she still ardently desired that the beautiful heiress should become her daughter-in-law. She rose from her chair, and as she did so Agnes, with the prettiest little confusion imaginable, met her with outstretched hands and with a look of deprecation in her lovely eyes which would have melted a sterner heart than Lady Mary's.

"How good of you!" murmured Agnes, and there was a whole volume of apology and of regret in the simple words.

"My dear, you and I must always be friends," said Lady Mary in answer to all the unspoken things which she felt certain were in the girl's mind. "I was always fond of you—but you really did behave badly, Agnes."

Mr. Jakes had discreetly retired to a distant part of the shop.

Agnes lifted her eyes, they were full of a regretful melancholy. Lady Mary in thinking it over afterwards, could almost have sworn that there had been tears in them, so deep and so touching was their sadness. A lovely blush rose to her face—a blush that seemed like maidenly modesty, but that was, in truth, nothing but the intense excitement of the situation, as she murmured :

"Do not judge me hardly. Perhaps if you knew all——!" and then her eyelids fell, and the faint echo of a sigh rounded off the unfinished sentence.

Lady Mary, who was very far from knowing all, who in point of fact knew nothing at all about the reasons which had brought her son's engagement to Agnes to an end, felt the truth and justice of this remark. She had always divined that the fault might very possibly have been mainly Jack's, however much the blame might rest upon Agnes.

To her keen motherly eyes, Agnes seemed to be agitated and distressed, and in spite of her great beauty there was a certain shadow of sadness and of suffering in her face and manner which could not fail to impress her favourably.

At that moment Agnes, who was facing the street door, drew suddenly back from her with a little exclamation of dismay, and turning rapidly away began to examine the backs of the volumes upon the shelves of the Circulating Library ; Lady Mary looking quickly round, perceived that her son had entered the shop.

It was a moment of extreme awkwardness for them all. Lady Mary was cruelly nervous as to what was going to happen. Agnes, grown wiser by experience, had made up her mind to play her cards this time in a totally different fashion, and had determined, come what might, that the first advances should not be from her, and Jack, thus suddenly flung into the presence of the woman he had so ruthlessly thrown over, realized all at once how intensely disagreeable it is to an English gentleman to feel that he has behaved like a blackguard.

He looked feebly and helplessly towards his mother, for, being like a large majority of men utterly destitute of that fine quality which is known as "moral courage," he naturally expected her to come to his help, and she, quickly understanding his mute appeal, dashed bravely, and a little breathlessly, into the breach.

"Here is an old friend of ours, Jack, who will like to be remembered by you."

At this Agnes turned round and with downcast eyes stood facing him. She did not offer to shake hands with him, and her under lip trembled slightly.

To Lady Mary her attitude seemed full of modest penitence for the past. In Jack's eyes it very naturally resembled the injured pride of a woman who has been deeply wronged.

As a matter of fact it was neither the one nor the other, only a very cleverly contrived piece of acting.

"Won't you shake hands with me, Miss Verinder?" said Jack very humbly, as he made a step towards her.

"If you wish it, Mr. Ludlow," answered Agnes without lifting her eyes, and held out her hand to him.

"If you can ever forgive me——" began Jack in an agitated murmur that was inaudible to his mother.

"I have forgotten everything, Mr. Ludlow. Let the past rest—it *is* past!" And then she lifted those glorious eyes of hers and allowed them for a brief moment to melt bewilderingly into his, ere she dropped them once more in the seeming confusion of maiden modesty. Upon which, Jack instantly experienced a queer and unaccountable sense of regret and rebellion, and did not feel at all so certain that the Past was indeed Past—or that, in spite of all that had happened to him since he last parted with her, he did in very truth desire it to be so.

Agnes drove her ponies home again that day in a serene and self-satisfied frame of mind. She knew that she had come very well out of that meeting, and had earned by her discretion the good opinion both of the mother and the son.

There was to be no "rushing" of Jack this time, no driving him headlong into an untenable position by the fictitious entanglement of his senses, and by propitious combinations of moonlight and melody. He should walk into it himself this time, open-eyed and in broad daylight, and then it would be utterly impossible for him to draw back. He was no longer a boy, and would probably be no longer accessible to boyish measures. Four years had aged Jack considerably, and the secret and tragic story of his first love had left its traces most markedly upon him. He looked graver and quieter than of old, there was a certain reserve in his manner, and the flashes of merriment in his brown eyes were rarer and less spontaneous. Although Agnes had not been able in her brief interview with him to notice all this, she had been able to observe that he was very much better-looking than he used to be, he was broader and more manly in figure, and the Southern climate which had suited his health had browned and perfected his features. The future Lord Castlemere was now a very handsome man, and Agnes was not at all insensible to the fact.

She was surprised to find herself attracted by Jack in a way which he had never attracted her in the old days. Perhaps it was the knowledge that it would be hard work to win him back, and the consciousness that she would have to teach him to love her before he would be hers, that added zest to her feelings towards him. Or perhaps it was only after all the title and the Castlemere diamonds, and the conviction that this perhaps was the last good opportunity of making a brilliant marriage she was likely to have.

Be this as it may, there was a sense of elation upon her as she drove home by herself from Northminster, which reflected itself in the brightness of her eyes and colour.

"What is the matter?" asked her aunt as she came in.  
"Something has happened!"

"Yes, something has happened. I have met Lady Mary and Mr. Ludlow."

"And of course you have asked him to come here?"

"Of course I have done nothing of the sort. But he will come all the same."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because I did not give him the smallest encouragement to do so," answered Agnes with a laugh. "Don't look so bewildered, Aunt! I know very well what I am about!"

"I am sure I hope you do, my dear. But pray remember that if you mean to marry Mr. Ludlow, you will have to go to work very carefully. If one word were to reach Lady Mary's ears, or his, of your goings on with poor Hugh Lawley for the last two years, I wouldn't give a fig for your chances of becoming Lady Castlemere!"

"And who is to tell them, pray?" cried Agnes angrily. She had flung herself down upon a low couch, and a dark red flush of annoyance dyed her brow. "They have been abroad, they have heard no London gossip, the only people here who could do me any harm are the Stoneleys, and they are in Scotland. Besides, I have done with the whole business," she added almost fiercely, "it is over and forgotten. Why do you mention the wretched man's name to me? Pray never speak of him again."

She rose impatiently and walked to the window and back.

Mrs. George only shrugged her shoulders.

"I feel rather sorry for poor young Ludlow!" she said presently.

"Keep your pity for him until he asks you for it," said her niece, stopping short before her in her walk. Then, with a sudden change in her voice, she exclaimed earnestly: "Oh! why will you never credit me with a single good feeling, Aunt George?"

Aunt George might have replied because she knew her to be incapable of one, but, as she was a peace-loving woman on the whole, she prudently held her tongue.

"If I can only bring this thing about and marry and settle down, I shall turn over a new leaf altogether. I shall make Jack a good wife, and be a good daughter-in-law to Lady Mary, and I shall stop in the country and do my duty, and visit the poor, and organize charity bazaars, and——"

But here Mrs. George arrested her by bursting into a peal of loud and contemptuous laughter.

"Why don't you say at once that you will read your Bible and say your prayers twice a day as well, my dear? No, no, Agnes, you can tell all that to Lady Mary when you are engaged to her son, and perhaps she may believe you, but you really cannot expect *me* to swallow all that rhodomontade!"

The door closed behind her aunt and her mocking laughter.

Agnes stood quite still for a minute or two in the middle of the room.

"How I hate Aunt George!" she said presently in a low, hard voice. "How I hate her! and the worst of it is I daren't tell her so, for I dare not make an enemy of her. But when I am Lady Castlemere I shall certainly cut my Aunt George! And I really did mean it too. I really should like to lead a good life and live down the past, but that is the way one's best impulses are misunderstood! Why did she taunt me with Lawley's name? Oh, God! can a woman *never* shake her name free from scandal in this world?"

Never, Agnes Verinder, never!—for never yet has there been found the water that will wash the stains from a smirched reputation, or the memory that will grow quite oblivious of a woman's stormy past!

Meanwhile Jack Ludlow, for his part, had driven his mother home from Northminster in a dreamy and meditative silence which Lady Mary took care not to break in upon.

The sight of Agnes Verinder had undoubtedly affected him powerfully. Her physical beauty had always exercised a strong fascination for him. Her splendid figure, in its Juno-like proportions, together with the languid grace of her attitudes and the half-smothered fires of her magnificent eyes, appealed to senses in a curiously distinct manner. No other woman had ever roused in him that peculiar kind of excitement that she did. His lost Madge, whom he had loved with his whole heart, had appealed almost entirely to that higher and holier portion of a man's nature which some women instinctively call forth in the men with whom they have to do. His *soul* as well as his heart had loved her, and to this hour, all the tenderness and chivalry that was in him encircled her memory in reverence, as a precious relic is enshrined in a jewel-studded casket of purest gold. In losing her, Jack sometimes felt with a wild and unutterable regret, that he had lost his hold upon all that was good in this world, as well as all that was worth striving after in the next.

Far other were the fires that Agnes' spendid physique awoke within him. These were of the Earth, Earthy ; and no faintest ray of a Heaven-born purity shone across the fiercer glow of their lurid light. Nevertheless, as a complete contrast to the woman he had loved before, Agnes was perhaps even more fatally dangerous to him than any other, who might more nearly have resembled the sweet and candid girl-wife whom he had lost.

When he looked back to that never-to-be-forgotten evening when she had lured him by her artifices to fall away from his faith and his truth towards Madge, he shuddered indeed at the recollection, but more at his own baseness than at the frankness of her preference, in which of course there lay indeed an element that was by no means unflattering to his vanity. Time too, had softened down many of the salient points of her conduct which had then, so shocked and distressed him.

He remembered also that he had treated her badly, and that she would only have been in her right if she had turned her back upon him to-day. If he had not actually wounded her heart, he had at any rate trampled upon her pride—and her gentle and modest reception of him to-day touched him very deeply.

She had never married ; that fact alone seemed to unfold a whole volume of her private history to him ! Perhaps, during

these years when he had half forgotten her very existence, she had all the time been suffering silently and bitterly for the sake of one who had ruthlessly destroyed her happiness. Perhaps she loved him! The idea was not without its charm to him.

He was free now. Free to offer his hand and what was left of his heart to anyone he pleased—he might not indeed be able to offer her his better self or his deeper love, but he could give her his genuine admiration, and he could offer to her at least one thing—reparation for the past.

Before he reached Castle Regis he had made up his mind that he would ride over to lunch at Deep Deane the following morning.

Lady Mary said no word to him about Agnes, experience had made her wary; but in the safe seclusion of Castlemere's study she revealed to him the details of the meeting between the young people in Jakes's shop.

"I believe it will all come on again—"

"I am more than glad. It will be of the greatest comfort to me if it is so. I shall tell Jack—"

"You will tell him nothing, Castlemere!—believe me, Jack is not a man to be driven. Let us leave it to chance—fate has thrown them together again, and fate will do the rest."

And when Jack announced at breakfast the next day that he intended to ride over to call on Sir Herbert and should not be back to lunch, Lady Mary had self-control enough to refrain from even a glance of covert triumph in the direction of her brother-in-law.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### NEWS FOR LANCE.

Friendship is constant in all other things  
Save in the office and affairs of love :  
Therefore all hearts in love, use their own tongues.

—SHAKESPEARE.

A FORTNIGHT later Lance Parker was on his way to Castle Regis. For many days after his visit to Fairmead, he had been so depressed and so thoroughly unnerved by what he had discovered there, that he had not been able to rouse himself sufficiently to take up the threads of his broken life again. He

had a bedroom in town, and he sat all day in his Club, reading or pretending to read—more often he was only dreaming of the past, and of that fair young life which Death, as he believed, had taken so early, and hidden for ever out of sight, beneath the church-yard's sods.

There was a mystery about it, too, which all the thinking about it in the world seemed unable to unravel to him. Why, if she had loved Jack and Jack had loved her, had nothing come of that love? Why had he left her? Was it possible that he had been blind and insensible to that sweet gift of her heart, for which he himself would have given his life? He supposed it must have been so. He fancied even that Jack must have trifled with her—meaning nothing—and then having gone his way had forgotten her. Then, had she suffered?—had she sorrowed much?—and what again was this other trouble which she had written to him about, and by reason of which she had prayed him to meet her in London and to help her?

He had not done so, and seemingly she had gone home—to die!

Often he read over the little note she had written to him, trying to decipher her meaning, and to gain some insight into what her sorrow might have been, but always the brief lines baffled and bewildered him anew, and with a sorrowful shake of the head he would return the crumpled paper to his pocket-book, folding it up and putting it away with reverent fingers as a sacred thing, which a dear dead hand had touched.

In course of time it came to Jack's ears that Lance had returned from his wanderings and had been seen in town. Thereupon came an indignant and reproachful letter, rallying him upon having forgotten his old friends and urging him peremptorily to come at once to Castle Regis and to take up his quarters there for an indefinitely long visit. Lady Mary added her entreaties in a little postscript at the end of the letter; and Lance, shaking off the clouds of gloom that oppressed him, accepted the invitation, fixed an early day, and started North.

All the way in the train his thoughts were deeply occupied by that summer which Jack and he had spent upon the *Naiad* below Fairley Lock. It was, perhaps, natural in any case that he should have dwelt upon it, seeing that since that period of intimacy and genuine companionship, he had been parted so

entirely from the man who for many years had been his greatest friend. There had been no division between them, no disagreement, save one so vague and so intangible, that it had never been put into words on either side. It was Life that had parted them—Life, that divides us so often from our dearest, that takes two people who have been much to each other, and sends one to one side of the world, and one to the other ; as straws that are tossed together upon a stream, become widely severed by the current, and never come together again. Thus it is that the current of Life deals with men and women. For months, for years, it may be, our existence is so intimately bound together that it seems as if nothing save Death itself can have power to part us, then all at once, no one knows why or wherefore, we are sundered ! Time and silence roll between us, other voices fill our days, other interests, crop up around us, the voice that was once so familiar, speaks no more, and the life that ran parallel to our own, has diverged and gone on its own way, and we know it no more, save as a tender memory in the store-closet of our past.

So, it had been with Lance Parker and Jack Ludlow, only in that in their case, the silence was suddenly broken, the lute had taken up again the interrupted strain, the wheel of fate had taken half a turn backwards, and they were to meet again !

Would they be changed to one another ? or would everything be the same as before ? Would the good old bachelor life begin again ? the days of sport together over flood and field, the cosy evenings of smoke and talk ? the pleasant chaff, the congenial answering of spirit to spirit upon every subject under the sun ?

These were the questions which Lance asked of himself as the express train bore him rapidly northwards.

And in order to start things fairly between them, he made up his mind that he would speak to Jack on the very first opportunity about Madge. Had he heard that she was dead, he wondered ? and if so, had he cared ? Perhaps he did not know it, perhaps, even, he would be sorry when he heard the news, sorry with that passing sorrow, which makes a man sad for an hour, with a sadness which he is able to shake off comfortably as he sits down with a good appetite to discuss his well-cooked dinner.

The train steamed into Northminster Station and there stood

Jack waiting for him on the platform. A stronger, broader, older-looking Jack than of old, with the hue of health on his sun-tanned features and a thoroughly happy light in his clear brown eyes.

In a moment the two men's hands were locked together in that close grip which is an Englishman's truest expression of friendship. Their first words, too, were eminently British and prosaic.

"Here you are, old chap!"

"How are you, old man?"

"Where are your traps? hope you've brought your gun."

"Trust me! and my rod too! Two portmanteaux and a hat-box, that's all."

"There's the cart for the luggage. Leave your bag—James will bring it on. Come on."

In a few minutes they were swinging out of the town into the country roads, seated side by side together on a high dog-cart with a fast trotting bay mare in front of them.

"This is like old times, Jack."

"Yes, isn't it jolly? What do you mean, you old Hermit-crab, by shutting yourself in London all this time and never letting me know you were home? However, now I've got you, I don't mean to let you go in a hurry, I can tell you."

So Jack *was* just the same again after all! Or—was he? Lance glanced a little curiously at the upright figure on the driving-box beside him.

He was not quite sure about it yet.

"You will have a lot to tell me, Lance. I want to hear all about your big game, and the bear hunts, and the stalking the wapiti. Lord! what a lucky chap you are, Lance, to have seen and done so much whilst I have been fiddling about in European capitals and dawdling away life in foreign hotels. You'll have to tell me all you have done, and describe your big days."

"Never fear, we'll have many a good old-fashioned bachelor jaw over our pipes together, old man, and I'll spin you as many yarns as you like—though, for the matter of that, I don't know why you and I shouldn't start off on a little trip of our own next year—eh?"

Then Lance was distinctly conscious that there was a change.

Jack hesitated a moment, and a vague shadow passed across his face.

"There's nothing on earth I should love so well," he answered a little slowly. "If—if I could only see my way to it, but—however, we will talk it over by-and-bye."

"Done any boating, this summer?" asked Lance presently.

"No, we didn't get home till the end of June, you see, and I had to come home. I couldn't leave the mother, and my uncle is getting old and feeble and expects me to stick at home and look after things for him. I should dearly love to have a pull on Father Thames again!" He said it with a sigh, and Lance answered quickly:

"Those were happy days we spent on the *Naiad*, Jack! I shall always look back to that summer as the most delightful time of my life. By the way, have you ever heard any news about——?"

But the question was never finished, for Jack turned suddenly round to him and, cutting him short as though he had not been listening to him, said with a slight air of embarrassment:

"Lance, old man, I have something to tell you, and I may as well tell it you now as later."

They had reached the foot of a long steep hill, and Jack reined the mare into a walk, the groom had jumped off the back seat to walk up the hill, and they were practically alone.

Somehow Lance's heart sank. Such a beginning could only mean one thing. He knew what was coming.

"All right, say on, what is it?" he answered dully, looking straight out before him at the woodland landscape fast yellowing into autumnal hues.

For a moment or two Jack was silent, flicking the mare's sides lightly with the whip; apparently the confession he was about to make caused him some difficulty to put into words, and it was with most palpable nervousness that he at length burst forth with seeming irrelevance:

"You were talking about a trip abroad together; well, you must know of course how much I should like such a thing, and to go with you, old man, would be delightful. I can't think of anything jollier in fact—but a man isn't always his own master, you know."

"Surely your mother, now she is so much stronger, could spare you—and your uncle——"

"Oh, yes, there would be no difficulty about them; I could get away easy enough if that were all, but there is something else, Lance."

"Oh." The interjection was neither an exclamation nor an interrogation. It was merely a commentary remark, not at all calculated to help a nervous man on with his subject.

Jack gave an uneasy sideways glance at his companion. He wished he would display some interest or curiosity, but Lance was filling his pipe with deliberate tranquillity and looked profoundly neutral.

"Can't you guess what it is, Lance?" he remarked insinuatingly.

"Oh, yes, I can guess fast enough. You are going to get married, I suppose."

"You've hit it," said Jack.

"I always was remarkable for great mental sagacity," observed Lance. He was deeply engaged in striking a wax match, sheltering the flame between his hands and drawing long breaths at the mouthpiece of his pipe. When the bowl was fairly alight he shut up his light-box with a snap, and added, as he returned it to his pocket, "I suppose I ought to congratulate you."

"Don't take the trouble to do so if it is inconvenient," replied Jack with some offence. "Upon my word, old man, you are not particularly enthusiastic over my news!"

"My dear Jack, why on earth should I be enthusiastic? You don't expect me to say I am glad, do you? Just as I had come back, hoping that our old friendship was to be resumed and we were going to have such good times together!"

"So we shall, Lance, so we shall. I can't of course go round the world with you under the circumstances, but why on earth shouldn't we have many good days together? I am not going to leave off shooting and hunting and fishing and enjoying myself because I am going to take a wife, I hope, nor am I going to give up the dearest fellow and the best pal I ever had in my life."

"Ah, but Jack," interrupted Lance, a good bit softened by the affectionate tone of the last words. "You know it will be very

different—everything is over and done with, when a man marries."

"You talk as if a married man was the same thing as a dead man!"

"So he is, pretty nearly, as far of course as his bachelor friendships and pleasures go."

Then there was another little awkward pause. The groom had jumped up behind, and they were trotting rapidly down the smooth white road. Away down in the valley the noble castellated frontage of Castle Regis arose above the varied tones of the brown and yellow woods, the trout stream wound like a silver snake amongst the meadows, and the round-topped, barren moors, where grouse and blackgame abounded, stretched in swelling purple undulations beyond the confines of the park.

It was a fair prospect, and a fair inheritance for a man to be born to, and it looked unspeakably lovely, as it lay stretched like a map beneath them, in the tender radiance of the September afternoon.

Lance was struggling manfully with his temper. Something far deeper than personal disappointment at losing his bachelor crony, lay at the root of his gruff and unsympathetic reception of Jack's news. He was angry and wounded, and bitterly jealous for her who was dead. Why couldn't Jack have married her and made her happy, since he wished to take to himself a wife? Was she not good enough, and fair enough, and well-born enough, to have been welcomed as a daughter at yonder stately castle? If he had married her she might have been alive now—alive and happy, waiting there to greet her husband's friend—instead of rotting in her lonely grave. Ah, the pity of it! the pity of it!

"You haven't asked me yet who the lady is," observed Jack, breaking in upon his turbulent meditations.

"No—no more I have. Who is it?"

"It is Miss Agnes Verinder; she is the only daughter of our neighbour, Sir Herbert Verinder—see over there," pointing with his whip down into the valley, "that is where his place, Deep Deane, lies; you can just see the chimneys of the house above the trees. Agnes is a great favourite of my mother's—in fact, she and my uncle have desired the match for a long time. My uncle not unnaturally thinks about the property which will

eventually be hers, and my mother is persuaded that she will make an excellent wife to her absolutely perfect son. Agnes is a very beautiful girl, you will admire her—Oh, by-the-way, you have seen her, you must remember her. She was at that horrible picnic we had on the *Naiad* when it poured all day."

And then a sudden memory swept over him as he uttered the words—a memory of that golden evening when, after that disastrous picnic was over, he had walked out and met Madge upon her pony, and there in the radiance of the dying day had told her that he loved her, and had held her for the first time to his heart. Did life hold such evenings for him now?

Lance, suddenly glancing at his friend's face, was puzzled to see a deathly pallor rush like a wave over his bronzed and healthy face—it was gone in a moment and his natural colour returned, but that evidence of a sudden and unaccountable emotion bewildered him.

"I remember Miss Verinder perfectly," he answered after a moment. "She is very tall and goddess-like, and she had a very elaborate and beautiful dress on, which she was dreadfully afraid of spoiling, and her lace parasol got soaked into a sort of pink cream with white streaks on it!"

"You have described her perfectly," answered Jack, with a slight laugh. "That was she. She always dresses well."

"She is very handsome. You will have a beautiful wife"

"Thanks, old fellow. Yes, she is good-looking."

"And when is the event to come off?"

"In December, I believe. They tell me it takes nearly three months to buy frocks. I shall get a good five weeks' hunting first."

They were nearing the Park gates now, and suddenly Lance said in an oddly earnest voice:

"Jack, old man, I am your oldest friend——"

"Of course you are, Lance—the oldest and the best! and by the same token you will have to be my best man."

"Will you answer me one question from your heart—for the sake of our old friendship—and not be angry with me for asking?"

"Ask away, Lance."

"Were you in love with Miss Verinder then—on the day of that picnic, I mean?"

Jack turned upon him a startled face, and eyes wide open with indignant refutation.

"In love with her then?—when we were on the *Naiad*, you mean?—Good God, no! What can have put such an idea into your head?"

The vehemence of his denial was unmistakeable, and was a fresh perplexity to Mr. Parker, who, however, only answered unconcernedly:

"Oh, only I rather wish you had been—that is all!"

A reply which puzzled Jack almost as much as his previous question had done.

It would have been the solution of much that was incomprehensible to Lance Parker's mind had the question been differently answered; for had Jack been attached to Miss Verinder in those days, it would have not been wonderful that he should have remained impervious to the quieter charm of Madge's less remarkable loveliness—nor would it be strange that with so strong an attraction as that handsome and well-dressed woman, he should have remained unconscious of another love that might have been his for the asking.

But Jack had just denied with indignation, nay, almost with anger, that he had been in love at that time with the woman who was now to become his wife—and Lance was more in a fog about the past than ever!

In the face of this new complication he could not speak of Madge and of her death to Jack now. He could not put to him those searching questions that he had prepared, nor rake up that forgotten memory out of the slumbering ashes of the past! Perhaps at some future occasion an opportunity might occur which would enable him to discover the truth, but for the present, to drag her name, and her sad end, into the flaring sunlight of Jack's new hopes and brilliant future, was an impossibility to him. It would have been a desecration of her, and a jarring chord to have struck amongst the joy-bells of Jack's betrothal.

So he was silent as they drove up the wide avenue to the handsome terraced portico, where Lord Castlemere and Lady Mary stood waiting—with the true instinct of hospitality—bareheaded in the sunshine, to welcome their guest to the house.

But in spite of their kindness and the heartiness of their



greetings, and in spite of Jack's evident pleasure and delight in his society and his eagerness to be off on the morrow after the partridges with him, and in spite of that "yarn" about the "big game," which they duly had at night in the cosy smoking-room together over their nocturnal pipes—in spite of all this, Lance realised very sadly, as he laid his head upon his pillow that night, that the good old days were over for ever, and that betwixt himself and his early friend there was fixed a gulf, which was so wide and so deep that nothing in this world would ever serve to bridge it over or bring them back again to the old conditions of perfect fellowship and sympathy.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE LAST BLOW.

"Hark! to the hurried question of Despair :  
'Where is my child?'—an echo answers, 'Where?'"

—BYRON.

REGULARLY every morning a quietly-dressed young woman turned the corner of one of those numerous dull and mean little streets which lie between the Marylebone Road und Oxford Street, and proceeded in a south-easterly direction towards the noise and confusion of the main thoroughfares. Every morning at the same hour, wet or fine, for nearly a month, that same young woman might have been met at the self-same corner. At the beginning of the time her step had been quick and elastic, there had been an eager hopefulness in her eyes, and her cheeks although pale, were still rounded into the soft outlines of youth and health. But as the days went on, her step became feebler and slower, and dark circles traced by sleepless nights and harrowing anxiety began to creep around her tired and languid eyes—whilst the cheeks fell away into pathetic hollows, and the rosy lips became paler and more pinched as each day of hopeless search succeeded its predecessor.

There was another woman who was accustomed to come by this corner at the same hour every morning of her life, who used to look at the pale girl at first with an idle interest as she passed by her, then by degrees with a livelier sympathy, quickening insensibly, as the days went by, into intense and almost painful compassion.

This other woman was well-clad and prosperous in appearance. She wore handsome dresses of silk or cloth, and smart little dainty bonnets tied securely under her full, round chin, setting off a kind and good-looking face, in which shrewd common sense was curiously blended with soft-hearted womanliness ; a combination that is more rare than it may be imagined. Her age might have been two or three and thirty, and her figure was lissome and graceful. When it was fine this pleasant looking lady walked, stepping out firmly and freely upon well-shod feet, with well-shaped insteps and slender ankles, and holding her silken skirts carefully up out of the dust and mud of the pavements, and when it was wet she drove in a hansom, and then sometimes she would bid the man drive a little slower past the end of Boston Street until she could catch a glimpse of that slender, sad figure coming out of one of the poor doorways of the mean little row of lodging houses.

Mrs. Waterson used to watch quite anxiously at last for the girl ; once or twice she saw her again in the evening on her way home, but not often, and sometimes she missed her altogether for a day, and then she used to feel quite uneasy and uncomfortable about her.

"I wonder who she can be, and where she goes to every day," Mrs. Waterson used to think to herself, even in the midst of her busy life, which gave her but little time to think about anything save her own affairs. "I suppose she goes to work somewhere, but she must be badly paid for she gets thinner and whiter every day. Yet, somehow, she looks like a lady—I am certain she cannot have been born to work."

Mrs. Waterson herself had not been born to work. Her father had been a Queen's Counsel and her mother the daughter of a physician in good practice. But her parents were both dead, and she had imprudently married a good-looking young barrister, who had neither the wits nor the chances for getting on in his profession. He was briefless when she married him, and he continued briefless until the day of his death. All he had ever been able to do, had been to squander his wife's little fortune and to make away in some mysterious fashion with every penny he could lay his hands upon. When he died and left her with three small children on her hands, Constance Waterson found herself so poor, and so at a loss as to how she

was to clothe and feed herself and her little ones, that she set about to consider what she could do to earn a living for them and for herself.

A less self-reliant woman would have fallen back upon the worn-out resource of going out as a governess, or would have sought a place as companion to an old lady.

Mrs. Waterson would not have been content with this. She thought she knew how to do better for herself. She still possessed a small capital, a few hundred pounds, which she could spend as she pleased. It was her all, and failure would mean beggary, but she did not intend to fail. She laid out her slender capital carefully, and with judicious prudence, and she started business as a fashionable dress-maker.

The few relations she had in the world held up their hands in dismay and were highly scandalized. They wrote terrible letters to her, telling her that she was disgracing her family and dragging her husband's honour into the mud; that she was lowering herself from the station of life in which God had placed her, and that her name would have to be struck off from their visiting lists.

Constance only smiled to herself at their angry indignation, put their letters into the fire, and went her own way. They none of them offered to help her or her penniless children, and she knew that she had nothing to expect from anybody but herself.

Her little venture was crowned with success. She had always been fond of pretty dresses, and in her palmy days had been reckoned as a woman of great taste amongst her acquaintances. What she knew already, stood her in good stead, and what she did not know, she picked up quickly and readily.

For the first year it was anxious and uphill work enough, and she was often ready to despair—she had to borrow money, and her expenses were often greater than her profits. But hard work and perseverance and an exceedingly determined spirit, brought their own reward at last; and the day came when, having overcome her early difficulties, she found herself in clear waters at last.

The business thrived and increased. Her good repute gained ground, smart carriages crowded about her door, and the money came pouring in in a continuous stream.

Mrs. Waterson took a nice house in the neighbourhood of the Regent's Park for her children, engaged a good governess and servants to look after them, and, flushed with success, and with the return of comfort and competence to her home, flung herself more thoroughly into her work than ever. Wet or fine she was always at her place of business by ten o'clock in the morning, and she seldom left it until after six in the evening. She was just and fair in all her dealings, never overcharged her customers and always paid her workwomen well. Therefore she was as popular and as respected, as she was successful.

Now, beneath all the shrewdness and worldly wisdom which habits of business engendered in her, Constance Waterson still possessed a heart of the most sympathetic tenderness. She could never forget the days of her hand-to-hand struggle with poverty; when starvation, gaunt and terrible, had stared with bloodshot eyes into the poor room where her pale little children had wasted away for lack of sufficient food and firing.

When she grew rich she would often go out of her way to do a good turn to someone who was poorer and more miserable than herself, and no beggar ever pleaded in vain at her door-step.

It was scarcely wonderful therefore that she found herself taking a deeper interest every week, in the girl who attracted her daily attention in the street.

She did not, however, see her way to helping her. The girl did not beg, she seemed to be a lady, her face was refined and proud, and her clothes were well-made and of good material. Constance knew by experience that a lady who is poor is terribly sensitive, and she feared to wound her feelings by addressing her without any excuse for doing so. And yet she longed to know more about her. She felt convinced that she was in trouble, and she guessed that the time would soon come when she would stand in sore need of help.

Meanwhile, Madge, all unconscious of the kind eyes that watched her so compassionately, continued her daily walks amongst the crowded streets in search of work or occupation of some kind.

How hopeless a task it was only became revealed to her by degrees as the time wore away, and hope after hope became dashed to the ground.

Every morning, at first, leaving her boy under the care of the draggled landlady of the little lodging-house, she started forth full of eager energy in the certainty that something, she knew not what, would come to her before the day was over.

She haunted registry offices and governess' institutes, she answered in person numberless advertisements she found in the papers, for "young ladies of genteel appearance," who were wanted by manifold persons for many and various purposes. But always it was in vain. Either she was too late and the place was gone, or else they wanted personal references, and a character from her last situation—whilst the very mention of the child, from whom she could not be parted, seemed to be sufficient to secure her being turned out of doors with ignominy and derision.

Her little store of money, in spite of her utmost care, was rapidly dwindling. She only rented one small room, a dreary back bedroom looking out into a desolate and soot-begrimed yard. Here, little Johnny had to be left from morning till night whilst his mother, as she had now taught him to call her, was out. Mrs. O'Grady did her best to "keep an eye," as she called it, upon him, but Mrs. O'Grady though warm-hearted, was a slatternly Irish woman, and had enough to do to mind her own brood of six dirty and noisy children besides looking after her lodger's. Still, by a special arrangement Johnny had his dinner with her children, and was admitted on a familiar footing to games in the dirty back yard. For these doubtful privileges Madge had to pay a little extra daily. Moreover Johnny was still weakly from his recent illness, and soon began to miss the fresh country air and plentiful food he had been accustomed to. He lost his appetite and began to fail; so that Madge had to get cod liver oil from the chemist, and fresh milk from the dairyman to strengthen and feed him up. All this made holes in her little capital.

She began to feel very hopeless and out of heart.

When she had recovered the shock of not finding Lance Parker at the Paddington Station on her arrival in London, she had realized quickly, that she must depend solely upon herself and her own exertions. She had guessed at once that her letter must have failed to reach him, and that in all probability he would never receive it.

To go back to Fairmead was clearly impossible; she knew

that her aunt would only tear her child from her, and that nothing now but increased severity, in consequence of her attempt to escape, would be dealt to her with regard to him.

In her utter inexperience of the cruel world, upon whose cold mercies she was flinging herself, it seemed to her that it would be very easy to remain in London and to earn her own living there. She was fairly well educated in a sound, old-fashioned way, and she was musical enough to teach little girls to play on the piano. In her ignorance she believed that it would be a simple thing to obtain occupation as a daily governess. She little knew how overstocked is that outlet for female energy, and how much larger is the supply of governesses than the demand for them.

After a few days she became less ambitious, work of any sort she would be thankful to take. Her old-world training had made her clever with her needle, she could sew and stitch, and her deft fingers knew how to fashion delicate laces and ribbons into caps for old ladies, and bonnets for young ones. Fired with a new hope she left the registry offices and turned to the shops—only to meet with greater rebuffs.

The well-dressed young ladies in the fashionable West End establishments looked coldly at her, and the head people turned her out.

"We don't want no beggars here," said one hard-faced woman to her as she pointed imperiously to the door.

"I am not a beggar. I am anxious for work. I will work for you for so little, so very little, if you will only try me and give me something to do."

"Work indeed! and where's your references, and who have you been 'prenticed to, to learn the business, I should like to know? Come, be off with you, or I'll give you in charge!"

This was only a sample of the reception she generally met with.

Day by day she lost hope, and inch by inch she saw the ghostly apparition of the famine spectre drawing closer and closer to her and the child. If only she had been alone she felt she could have borne it better—for of what good was life to her—would it not be very easy to die?

She had lost all—love, faith, and hope! Family affection had gone down for ever into Aunt Margaret's grave, and she had

voluntarily turned her back upon the material advantages of her existence. What had she left to live for?

But there was the child! For him, and for his privations, her heart ached with a horrible anguish.

She saw him failing day by day—his tiny face grew pale and wan—his eyes shone with the preternatural gleam of want—his chubby limbs became limp and attenuated. A wild rage of despair possessed her. What could she do to save him? How was she to put bread into his mouth?

Evening after evening as she sat with him in her lap, in the darkness of the squalid room—for she could not afford candles—hugging him to her heart, and soothing his moans with crooning murmurs of love and tenderness—giving him kisses when she fain would have given him food; a sort of rebellion against life, and against God Himself, arose wildly and madly in her heart.

What had she done to be so hardly treated? Was not her punishment out of all proportion to her sin?—nay, it had not even been sin, only a mistake—after all! A mistake to have given herself to a man she scarcely knew without the consent of her relations, and in defiance of the teaching that had been instilled into her. Oh! God was unjust indeed to visit her so harshly for this!

It was the old Puritan Creed of sin and its equivalent—of the equal balance dealt out in proportion to our deserts: the miserly creed that has wrecked the faith of thousands, and hardened scores of hearts into the bitterness of inextinguishable resentment!

Alas! why will not men and women shake off the burden of this horrible and vain delusion! For it cannot be—there can be no such thing. No debit and credit account is kept on high wherewith to torment poor suffering man, else were the Injustice of Life even more flagrant than its cruelty. Sin may, and doubtless does, bring its earthly consequences, but retribution is devilish and not Divine—and sorrow and suffering are sad laws which have nothing to do with individual shortcomings. Death and disease have their appointed work to do in every generation, and the Tower of Siloam falls upon the innocent as often as upon the guilty.

But to poor Madge, in this the darkest hour of her life, it only

seemed as though she had been faulty, perhaps even a little selfish and rebellious, and that for these trivial sins the Great God of the Universe was working out a cruel and awful revenge upon her. She had nothing in her early training to fall back upon—innocent things had always been held up to her as sins, and the narrow bigotry of a hard and loveless old woman had done its best to poison all the sweet springs of her existence.

Yet out of the mists of her storm-tossed misery there came a glimmer of light to which she turned in her despair.

The child had done no wrong! it could not be possible that the Lord of all the earth would wreak his wrath upon his sinless head! So in the agony of those night watches when sleepless and half-starved she soothed his poor little wasted limbs upon her breast, the poor girl prayed as she had never prayed before.

"God, let me bear the punishment, but spare him. Kill me if Thou willest, but save my child."

And her prayer was answered, yet not perhaps in the manner which she desired.

One evening, on her return from a long and, as usual, an utterly fruitless search for work, Madge came wearily and slowly up the miserable little street that was all she could now call home. She was very tired, she had eaten nothing since the morning, her aching feet lagged wearily one after the other, and the face that was once so bright with smiles, now wore that settled look of patient hopelessness which is so often to be seen on the faces of the women of the people.

As she neared her own door, she saw that Mrs. O'Grady was standing outside in the street waiting for her, and presently she came forward to meet her with a face of some disturbance.

"Law, mum, haven't you got the boy with you?"

"The boy?" her heart froze into stone. "What do you mean? Where is he?"

"I made sure you must have taken him, mum. Saints presarve us! what can have become of the little angel?"

A horrible faintness overcame her, she clutched at the woman's arm.

"Speak—speak!" she grasped.

"I've not clapped eyes on him since the mornin'; he never came home to his dinner, I thought you must have taken him. Holy Mother, don't look so, mam, he's only run out to play by

himself, he'll not be far away, the little 'un's often get playing together."

But Madge was out of hearing. Pushing her wildly aside, she rushed into the house up the narrow stairs into her own room calling loudly upon her child.

But in vain she looked into every hole and corner for him. The room was empty—from attic to cellar she sought for him, but Johnny was nowhere to be found.

Half distracted she tore out into the street again. Mrs. O'Grady, whose grimy brats were often missing for an hour or two, when they got playing together with other children in the narrow alleys at the back of Boston Street, tried to console her and pressed her at least to stop to have a cup of tea and a morsel of food. But she only shook her off speechlessly and rushed forth into the streets. It was getting dark, one by one the street lamps were gleaming forth out of the thin veil of mist which enveloped the autumn evening. She ran quickly along the street, a policeman stood at his beat at the corner, he recommended her to go and inquire at the police station, as she went she stopped and interrogated every man woman and child that she met. Some, workpeople for the most part, coming home from their day's labour, knew her by sight and remembered the fragile brown-eyed boy who played with Mrs. O'Grady's children, but none of them had seen him to-day. She reached the police station, and so disordered and wild were her looks, and so incoherent were the hoarse words that she gasped forth from her parched throat, that at the outset the intelligent official took her for a mad or a drunken woman and would have shut her up, till the heartrending agony of her appeal induced him at last to give some attention to what she was saying.

Then, when at last he did understand, he was inclined to treat the whole matter very lightly.

"Little boy lost? Oh, he'll have run home by now. You go back and you'll find him safe enough, ma'am. Bill, have you seen a little chap about? Blue eyes, curly hair, did you say, mam?"

"No, brown eyes and dark hair."

"Brown eyes and hair?—they all look much the same, three years old?—dressed in sailor suit? Not seen him, Bill? He'll have got playing with the other children, mam, there's lot's of small fry about Boston Street. Don't you worry,

the little chap is sure to run home, he'll be home by now very likely. 'Ere, Bill, you go along with the lady and 'ave a look for the little kid."

The superintendent wrote down the particulars, and smiled at her comfortably across his big book. He evidently did not think much of the matter, and the mother's agony seemed rather to amuse him than otherwise.

A burly policeman accompanied her out into the street. He had no comfort to give her, save that people don't steal children that are poorly dressed. "Most people 'as too many of their own to want stray ones," added Bill consolingly.

"But he may have got run over, or be lost, and never find his way back," cried Madge brokenly, "he is a country child, he would lose himself directly."

"Not likely, mam, we are certain to 'ear of 'im. You'll find 'im safe at 'ome by now most likely," he added cheerfully, repeating the formula of his superior.

But when they got back to Boston Street Johnny had not returned, and nobody could throw any light upon his disappearance.

For the whole of that night, and the whole of the next day, Madge sought for him far and near. She went to every police station for miles round, she wandered from the great crowded thoroughfares into the parks, and from the parks into the squares and terraces, she spent her last few shillings in having posters printed and pasted on to every lamp-post, at every street corner within hail—but all was in vain. The police got tired of looking about for a little brown-eyed boy who was nowhere to be found, and became interested in some fresh and more interesting case; the few neighbours who had come out with her at first, volunteering their services to help her, could not afford to give any more time from their work, and by the evening she was left alone wandering still, but wandering aimlessly and almost blindly about the streets.

For twenty-four hours a crust of bread and a mouthful of water was all that had passed her lips, all her money was gone, she had spent shillings recklessly in cabs and in paying messengers to go hither and thither, and now only a few coppers were left in her pocket.

Her head began to burn oddly and the houses of the street

seemed to be dancing a strange whirligig before her eyes—her tongue was parched and dry, her knees shook and knocked against each other, sometimes she put her hands out to clutch at the area railings to prevent herself from falling, and once, as the dusk drew on and the lamps shone out again, one by one in the dim twilight, she laughed, and the laugh sounded horrible and strange in her own ears.

She stopped to ask herself why she had laughed: but she could not think any longer, and she did not know. Only there came another laugh, like an evil echo in the deserted street, and this time it seemed to her as though some mocking devil was standing before her with flame-lit eyes barring her way, and jeering at her despair.

And then she uttered a piercing scream.

A cold darkness seemed to swallow her up—jets of angry fire shot up about her through the dense blackness. She fell forwards face downwards across the pavement, and remembered nothing more.

*(To be continued.)*

## Rural Pleasures.

I LOVE to leave the busy world awhile  
And roam the woods beside the murmuring brook,  
On Nature's charms to gaze—or else with book—  
Some poet of genius rare—the hours beguile.  
  
I love to sit upon the rustic stile  
And watch the circling of the sable rook,  
Or ply the gentle stream with baited hook,  
Tempting the finny tribes with subtle wile.  
Such tranquil, peaceful joys as these be mine,  
Far from the giddy whirl of revelry  
T'enjoy the fragrance of the sweet woodbine  
And listen to the lark's glad minstrelsy.  
  
Thus Nature's charms of song and scene combine  
To fill my soul with sweetest harmony.

W. CRAPPER.

# BELGRAVIA

OCTOBER, 1890.

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## April's Lady.

BY MRS. HUNGERFORD,

Author of "MOLLY BAWN," "PHYLLIS," "A LIFE'S REMORSE," etc.

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Tis said the rose is Love's own flower,  
Its blush so bright—its thorns so many."

THERE is no mistake in the joy with which Felix parts from his companions after luncheon. He breathes afresh as he sees them tearing up the staircase to get ready for their afternoon walk, Nurse puffing and panting behind them.

The drawing-room seems a bower of repose after the turmoil of the late feast, and, besides, it cannot be long now before she—they—return. That is if they—she—return at all! He has, indeed ample time given him to imagine this last horrible possibility as not only a probability, but a certainty, before the sound of coming footsteps up the stairs and the *frou-frou* of pretty frocks tells him his doubts were harmless. Involuntarily he rises from his chair, and straightens himself out of the rather forlorn position into which he has fallen, and fixes his eyes immovably upon the door. Are there *two* of them?

That is beyond doubt. It is only mad people who chatter to themselves, and certainly Mrs. Monkton is not mad.

Barbara has indeed raised her voice a little more than ordinary, and has addressed Joyce by her name on her hurried way up the staircase and across the cushioned recess outside

the door. Now she throws open the door and enters, radiant, if a little nervous.

"Here we are," she says, very pleasantly, and with all the put-on manner of one who has made up her mind to be extremely joyous under distinct difficulties. "You are still here, then, and alone. They didn't murder you. Joyce and I had our misgivings all along. Ah, I forgot, you haven't seen Joyce until now."

"How d'ye do?" says Miss Kavanagh, holding out her hand to him, with a calm, as perfect as her smile.

"I *do* hope they were good," goes on Mrs. Monkton, her nervousness rather increasing.

"You know I have always said they were the best children in the world."

"Ah! said, *said*," repeats Mrs. Monkton, who now seems grateful for the chance of saying anything. What is the meaning of Joyce's sudden amiability—and *is* it amiability, or—

"It is true one can say almost anything," says Joyce, quite pleasantly. She nods her head prettily at Dysart. "There is no law to prevent them. Barbara thinks you are not sincere. She is not fair to you. You always *do* mean what you say, don't you?"

But for the smile that accompanies these words, Dysart would have felt his doom sealed. But could she mean a stab so cruel, so direct, and still look kind?

"Oh! he *is* always sincere," says Barbara, quickly, "only people say things about one's children, you know, that—." She stops.

"They are the dearest children. You are a bad mother; you wrong them," says Joyce, laughing lightly, plainly at the idea of Barbara's affection for her children being impugned. "She told me," turning her lovely eyes full on Dysart, with no special expression in them, whatever, "that I should find only your remains after spending an hour with them." Her smile is brilliant.

"She was wrong, you see. I am still here," says Felix, hardly knowing what he says, in his desire to read her face, which is strictly impassive.

"Yes, still here," says Miss Kavanagh, smiling, always, and apparently meaning nothing at all; yet to Felix, watching her, there seems to be something treacherous in her manner.

"*Still here?*" Had she hoped he would be gone? Was that the cause of her delay? Had she purposely put off coming home to give him time to grow tired and go away? And yet she is looking at him with a smile!

"I am afraid you had a bad luncheon and a bad time generally," says Mrs. Monkton quickly, who seems hurried in every way. "But we came home as soon as ever we could. Didn't we Joyce?" Her appeal to her sister is suggestive of fear as to the answer, but she need not have been nervous about that.

"We *flew!*!" declares Miss Kavanagh with delightful zeal. "We thought we should never get here soon enough. Didn't we Barbara?" There is the very barest, faintest imitation of her sister's voice in this last question; a subtle touch of mockery, so slight, so evanescent as to leave one doubtful as to its ever having existed.

"Yes, yes, indeed," says Barbara colouring.

"We flew so fast indeed that I am sure you are thoroughly fatigued," says Miss Kavanagh, addressing her. "Why don't you run away now, and take off your bonnet and lie down for an hour or so?"

"But," begins Barbara, and then stops short. What does it all mean? this new departure of her sister's puzzles her. To so deliberately ask for a *tête-à-tête* with Felix! To what end? The girl's manner, so bright, filled with such a glittering geniality—so unlike the usual listlessness that has characterized it for so long—both confuses and alarms her. Why is she so amiable now? There had been a little difficulty about getting her back at all, quite enough to make Mrs. Monkton shiver for Dysart's reception by her, and here, now, half-an-hour later, she is beaming upon him and being more than ordinarily civil. What is she going to do?

"Oh! no 'buts,'" says Joyce gaily. "You know you said your head was aching, and Mr. Dysart will excuse you. He will not be so badly off even without you. He will have *me*!" She turns a full glance on Felix as she says this, and looks at him with lustrous eyes and white teeth showing through her parted lips. The *souçon* of mockery in her whole air, of which all through he has been faintly but uncomfortably aware, has deepened. "I shall take care he is not dull."

"But," says Barbara again, rather helplessly.

"No, no. You *must* rest yourself. Remember we are going to that 'at home,' at the Thesiger's to-night, and I would not miss it for anything. Don't dwell with such sad looks on Mr. Dysart, I have promised to look after him. You will *let* me take care of you for a little while, Mr. Dysart, will you not?" turning another brilliant smile upon Felix who responds to it very gravely.

He is regarding her with a searching air. How is it with her? Some old words recur to him.

"There is treachery, O Ahaziah!"

Why does she look at him like that? He mistrusts her present attitude. Even that aggressive mood of hers at the Doré gallery on that last day when they met, was preferable to this agreeable but detestable indifference.

"It is always a pleasure to be with you," says he steadily, perhaps a little doggedly.

"There! you see!" says Joyce with a pretty little nod at her sister.

"Well, I shall take half-an-hour's rest," says Mrs. Monkton reluctantly, who is, in truth, feeling as fresh as a daisy, but who is afraid to stay. "But I shall be back for tea." She gives a little kindly glance to Felix, and with a heart filled with forebodings leaves the room.

"What a glorious day it has been!" says Joyce, continuing the conversation with Dysart in that new manner of hers, quite as if Barbara's going was a matter of small importance, and the fact that she has left them, for the first time for all these months, alone together, of less importance still.

She is standing on the hearthrug, and is slowly taking the pins out of her bonnet. She seems utterly unconcerned. He might be the veriest stranger, or else the oldest, the most uninteresting friend in the world.

She has taken out all the pins now, and has thrown her bonnet on to the lounge nearest to her, and is standing before the glass in the overmantel patting and pushing into order the soft locks that lie upon her forehead.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Ah, were she pitiful as she is fair."

"Life's a varied, bright illusion,  
Joy and sorrow—light and shade."

"IT was almost warm," says she turning round to him. She seems to be talking all the time, so vivid is her face, so intense her vitality. "I was so glad to see the Brabazons again. You know them, don't you? Kit looked perfect. So lovely, so good in every way—voice, face, manner. I felt I envied her. It would be delightful to feel that everyone *must* be admiring one, as she does." She glances at him and he leans a little towards her. "No, no, not a compliment, *please*. I know I am as much behind Kit as the moon is behind the sun."

"I wasn't going to pay you a compliment," says he slowly.

"No?" she laughs. It was unlike her to have made that remark, and just as unlike her to have taken his rather discourteous reply so good-naturedly.

"It was a charming visit," she goes on, not in haste, but idly as it were, and as if words are easy to her. "I quite enjoyed it. Barbara didn't. I think she wanted to get home—she is always thinking of the babies—or—. Well, I did. I am not ungrateful. I take the goods the Gods provide, and find honest pleasure in them. I do not think, indeed, I laughed so much for quite a century as to-day with Kit."

"She is sympathetic," says Felix, with the smallest thought of the person in question in his mind.

"More than that, surely. Though *that* is a hymn of praise in itself. After all it is a relief to meet Irish people when one has spent a week or two in stolid England. You agree with me?"

"I am English," returns he.

"Oh! Of course! How rude of me! I didn't mean it however. I had entirely forgotten:—our acquaintance having been confined entirely to Irish soil until this luckless moment! You do forgive me?"

She is leaning a little forward, and looking at him with a careless expression.

"No," returns he briefly.

"Well, you should," says she, taking no notice of his cold rejoinder, and treating it indeed as if it is of no moment. If there was a deeper meaning in his refusal to grant her absolution she declines to acknowledge it. "Still, even that *bêtise* of mine need not prevent you from seeing some truth in my argument. We *have* our charms, we Irish, eh?"

"*Your* charm?"

"Well, mine, if you like, as a type, and"—recklessly, and with a shrug of her shoulders—"if you wish to be personal."

She has gone a little too far.

"I think I have acknowledged that," says he, coldly. He rises abruptly, and goes over to where she is standing on the hearthrug—shading her face from the fire, with a huge Japanese fan. "Have I ever denied your charm?" His tone has been growing in intensity, and now becomes stern. "Why do you talk to me like this? What is the meaning of it all—your altered manner—everything? Why did you grant me this interview?"

"Perhaps because"—still with that radiant smile, bright and cold as early frost—"Like that little soapy boy, I thought you would 'not be happy till you got it.'"

She laughs lightly. The laugh is the outcome of the smile, and its close imitation. It is perfectly successful, but on the surface only. There is no heart in it.

"You think I arranged it?"

"Oh, no; how could I? You have just said I arranged it." She shuts up her fan with a little click. "You want to say something, don't you?" says she, "well, say it!"

"You give me permission, then?" asks he, gravely, despair knocking at his heart.

"Why not—would I have you unhappy always?" Her tone is jesting throughout.

"You think"—taking the hand that holds the fan, and restraining its motion for a moment, "that if I do speak I shall be happier?"

"Ah! that is beyond me," says she. "And yet—yes; to get a thing over is to get rid of fatigue. I have argued it all out for myself, and have come to the conclusion——"

"For *yourself!*!"

"Well, for you too"—a little impatiently. "After all, it is you who want to speak. Silence, to me, is golden. But it occurred to me in the silent watches of the night," with another—now rather forced—little laugh, "that if you once said to me all you had to say, you would be contented, and go away, and not trouble me any more."

"I can do that now, without saying anything," says he slowly. He has dropped her hand; he is evidently deeply wounded.

"Can you?"

Her eyes are resting relentlessly on his. Is there magic in them? . . . Her mouth has taken a strange expression.

"I might have known how it would be," says Dysart, throwing up his head. "You will not forgive! It was but a moment—a few words, idle, hardly considered, and—"

"Oh, yes, *considered!*!" says she, slowly.

"They were unmeant!" persists he, fiercely. "I defy you to think otherwise. One great mistake—a second's madness—and you have ordained that it shall wreck my whole life! *You!*—That evening in the library at the Court. I had not thought of—"

"Ah!" she interrupts him, even more by her gesture—which betrays the first touch of passion she has shown—than by her voice, that is still mocking. "I *knew* you would have to say it!"

"You know me, indeed!" says he, with an enforced calmness that leaves him very white. "My whole heart and soul lies bare to you, to ruin as you will. It is the merest waste of time, I know; but still, I have felt all along that I *must* tell you again that I love you, though I fully understand I shall receive nothing in return but scorn and contempt. Still, to be able even to say it is a relief to me."

"And what is it to me?" asks the girl, as pale now as he is; "is it a relief—a comfort to *me*, to have to listen to you?"

She clenches her hands involuntarily. The fan falls with a little crash to the ground.

"No." He is silent a moment. "No—it is unfair—unjust! You shall not be made uncomfortable again. . . . It is the last time. . . . I shall not trouble you again in this way. I

don't say we shall never meet again. You"—pausing and looking at her—"you do not desire *that?*"

"Oh, no," coldly, politely.

"If you do, say so at once," with a rather peremptory ring in his tone.

"I should," calmly.

"I am glad of that. As my cousin is a great friend of mine, and as I shall get a fortnight's leave soon, I shall probably run over to Ireland, and spend it with her. After all"—bitterly—"why should I suppose it would be disagreeable to you?"

"It was quite a natural idea," says she, immovably.

"However," says he, steadily, "you need not be afraid that, even if we do meet, I shall ever annoy you in this way again—"

"Oh, I am never afraid," says she, with that terrible smile that seems to freeze him.

"Well, good-bye," holding out his hand. He is quite as composed as she is now, and is even able to return her smile in kind.

"So soon? But Barbara will be down to tea in a few minutes. You will surely wait for her?"

"I think not."

"But really *do!* I am going to see after the children, and give them some chocolate I bought for them."

"It will probably make them ill," says he, smiling still. "No, thank you. I must go now, indeed. You will make my excuses to Mrs. Monkton, please. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," says she, laying her hand in his for a second. She has grown suddenly very cold, shivering, it seems almost as if an icy blast from some open portal has been blown in upon her. He is still looking at her. There is something wild—strange—in his expression.

"You cannot realize it, but I can," says he, unsteadily. "It is good-bye for ever, so far as life for *me* is concerned!"

He has turned away from her. He is gone. The sharp closing of the door wakens her to the fact that she is alone. Mechanically, quite calmly, she looks round the empty room. There is a little Persian chair-cover over there all awry. She re-arranges it with a critical eye to its proper appearance, and afterwards pushes a small chair into its place. She pats a cushion

or two, and finally taking up her bonnet and the pins she had laid upon the chimney-piece, goes up to her own room.

Once there—

With a rush the whole thing comes back to her. The entire meaning of it—what she has done. That word—*for ever*. The bonnet has fallen from her fingers. Sinking upon her knees beside the bed, she buries her face out of sight. Presently her slender frame is torn by those cruel, yet merciful sobs!

\* \* \* \* \*

#### CHAPTER XL.

"The sense of death is most in apprehension."

"Thus grief still treads upon the heels of pleasure."

It is destined to be a day of grief! Monkton, who had been out all the morning, having gone to see the old people, a usual habit of his, had not returned to dinner—a very *usual* habit with him. It had occurred, however, once or twice, that he had stayed to dine with them on such occasions, as when Sir George had had a troublesome letter from his elder son, and had looked to the younger to give him some comfort—some of his time, to help him to bear it, by talking it all over. Barbara, therefore, whilst dressing for Mrs. Thesiger's "At Home," had scarcely felt anxiety, and, indeed, it is only now when she has come down to the drawing-room to find Joyce awaiting her, also in gala garb, so far as a gown goes, that a suspicion of coming trouble takes possession of her.

"He is late, isn't he?" she says, looking at Joyce with something nervous in her expression. "What can have kept him? I know he wanted to meet the General, and now—What *can* it be?"

"His mother, probably," says Joyce indifferently. "From your description of her, I should say she must be a most thoroughly uncomfortable old person."

"Yes. Not pleasant, certainly. A little of her, as George Ingram used to say, goes a long way. But still—And these Thesiger people are friends of his, and—"

"You are working yourself up into a thorough belief in the

sensational street accident," says Joyce, who has seated herself well out of the glare of the chandelier. " You want to be tragic. It is a mistake, believe me."

Something in the bitterness of the girl's tone strikes on her sister's ear. Joyce had not come down to dinner, had pleaded a headache as an excuse for her non-appearance, and Mrs. Monkton and Tommy (she could not bear to dine alone) had devoured that meal *à deux*. Tommy certainly had been anything but dull company.

" Has anything happened, Joyce ? " asks her sister quickly. She has had her suspicions of course, but they were of the vaguest order.

Joyce laughs.

" I told you your nerves were out of order," says she. " What should happen ? Are you still dwelling on the running over business ? I assure you, you wrong Freddy. He can take care of himself at a crossing as well as another man, and better. Even a hansom, I am convinced, could do no harm to Freddy."

" I wasn't thinking of him," says Barbara, a little reproachfully, perhaps. " I ——"

" No. Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself ! Here he is," cries she suddenly, springing to her feet, as the sound of Monkton's footsteps ascending the stairs can be now distinctly heard. " I hope you will explain yourself to *him* !" She laughs again and disappears through the doorway that leads to the second hall outside, as Monkton enters.

" How late you are, Freddy," says his wife, the reproach in her voice heightened because of the anxiety she has been enduring. " I thought you would never——What is it ? What has happened ? *Freddy*! there is bad news."

" Yes, very bad," says Monkton, sinking into a chair.

" Your brother——" breathlessly. Of late, she has always known that trouble is to be expected from him.

" He is dead," says Monkton in a low tone.

Barbara, flinging her opera cloak aside, comes quickly to him. She leans over him and slips her arms round his neck.

" *Dead!* " says she in an awestruck tone.

" Yes. Killed himself ! Shot himself ! The telegram came this morning when I was with them. I could not come home sooner ; it was impossible to leave them."

"Oh! Freddy, I am sorry you left them even now ; a line to me would have done. Oh, what a horrible thing, and to die like *that*."

"Yes." He presses one of her hands, and then rising, begins to move hurriedly up and down the room. "It was misfortune on misfortune," he says presently. "When I went over there this morning, they had just received a letter from him filled with—"

"From *him*!"

"Yes. That is what seemed to make it so much worse later on. Life in the morning, death in the afternoon!" His voice grows choked. "And *such* a letter as it was, filled with nothing but a most scandalous account of his—Oh!"—he breaks off suddenly as if shocked. "Oh, he is *dead*, poor fellow."

"Don't take it like that," says Barbara, following him and clinging to him. "You *know* you could not be unkind. There were debts then?"

"Debts! It is difficult to explain just now, my head is aching so, and those poor old people! Well, it means ruin for them, Barbara. Of course his debts must be paid ; his honour kept intact, for the sake of the old name, but—They will let *all* the houses, the two in town, this one and their own and—and the old place down in Warwickshire, the *home*, all must go out of their hands."

"Oh, Freddy, surely—surely there must be some way—"

"Not one. I spoke about breaking the entail. You know I—his death, poor fellow. I—"

"Yes, yes, dear."

"But they wouldn't hear of it. My mother was very angry even in her grief, when I proposed it. They hope that, by strict retrenchment, the property will right itself again ; and they spoke about Tommy. They said it would be unjust to him—"

"And to you," quickly. She would not have him ignored any longer.

"Oh, as for me, I'm not a boy, you know. Tommy is safe to inherit as life goes."

"Well, so are you," says she, with a sharp pang at her heart.

"Yes, of course. I am only making out a case. I think it

was kind of them to remember Tommy's claim in the very midst of their own great grief."

"It was indeed," says she remorsefully. "Oh, it *was*. But if they give up everything, where will they go?"

"They talk of taking a cottage—a small house somewhere. They want to give up everything to pay his infamous—*There!*" sharply, "I am forgetting again! But to see them, makes one forget everything else." He begins his walk up and down the room again, as if inaction is impossible to him. "My mother, who has been accustomed to a certain luxury all her life, to be now, at the very close of it, condemned to— It would break your heart to see her. And she will let nothing be said of him."

"Oh, *no*."

"Still, there should be justice. I can't help feeling that. *Her* blameless life, and *his*—and *she* is the one to suffer."

"It is so often so," says his wife in a low tone. "It is an old story, dearest, but I know that when the old stories come home to us individually they always sound so terribly new. But what do they mean by a small house?" asks she presently in a distressed tone.

"Well, I suppose a small house," says he with just a passing gleam of his old jesting manner. "You know my mother cannot bear the country, so I think the cottage idea will fall through."

"Freddy," says his wife suddenly. "She can't go into a small house, a *London* small house. It is out of the question. Could they not come and live with us?"

She is suggesting a martyrdom for herself, yet she does it unflinchingly.

"What! My aunt and all?" asks he, regarding her earnestly.

"Oh, of course, of course, poor old thing," says she, unable this time, however, to hide the quaver that desolates her voice.

"No," says her husband with a suspicion of vehemence. He takes her suddenly in his arms, and kisses her. "Because two or three people are unhappy is no reason why a fourth should be made so, and I won't have your life spoiled, so far as *I* can prevent it. I suppose you have guessed that I must go over to Nice—where *he* is—my father could not possibly go alone in his present state."

"When must you go?"

"To-morrow. As for you——"

"If we could go home," says she uncertainly.

"That is what I would suggest, but how will you manage without me? The children are so troublesome when taken out of their usual beat, and their Nurse — I often wonder which would require the most looking after, they, or she? It occurred to me to ask Dysart to see you across."

"He is so kind, such a friend," says Mrs. Monkton.  
"But——"

She might have said more but that at this instant Joyce appears in the doorway.

"We shall be late," cries she, "and Freddy, not even dressed, why——. Oh, has anything *really* happened?"

"Yes, yes," says Barbara hurriedly—a few words explains all. "We must go home to-morrow, you see; and Freddy thinks that Felix would look after us until we reached Kingstown or North Wall."

"Felix—Mr. Dysart?" The girl's face had grown pale during the recital of the suicide, but now she looks ghastly. "Why should he come?" cries she in a ringing tone that has actual fear in it. "Do you suppose that we two cannot manage the children between us? Oh, nonsense, Barbara; why Tommy is as sensible as he can be, and if Nurse *does* prove incapable, and a prey to sea-sickness, well—I can take baby, and you can look after Mabel. It will be all right! We are not going to America really. Freddy, *please* say you will not trouble Mr. Dysart about this matter."

"Yes. I really think we shall not require him," says Barbara. Something in the glittering brightness of her sister's eye warns her to give in at once, and indeed she had been unconsciously a little half-hearted about having Felix or any stranger as a travelling companion. "There, run away, Joyce, and go to your bed, darling, you look very tired. I must still arrange some few things with Freddy."

"What is the matter with her?" asks Monkton, when Joyce has gone away. "She looks as if she had been crying, and her manner is so excitable."

"She has been strange all day, almost repellent. Felix called—and—I don't know what happened, she insisted upon my leaving her alone with him; but I am afraid there was a scene

of some sort. I know she had been crying, because her eyes were so red, but she would say nothing, and I was afraid to ask her."

"Better not. I hope she is not still thinking of that fellow Beauclerk. However——" he stops short and sighs heavily.

"You must not think of her, now," says Barbara, quickly; "your own trouble is enough for you. Were your brother's affairs so very bad, that they necessitate the giving up of everything?"

"It has been going on for years. My father has had to economise, to cut down everything. You know the old place was let to a Mr.—Mr.—I quite forget the name now," pressing his hand to his brow; "a Manchester man at all events, but we always hoped my father would have been able to take it back from him next year, but now——"

"But you say they think in time that the property will——"

"*They* think so. I don't. But it would be a pity to undeceive them. I am afraid, Barbara," with a sad look at her, "you made a bad match. Even when the chance comes in your way to rise out of poverty it proves a thoroughly useless one."

"It isn't like you to talk like that," says she quickly. "There! you are overwrought, and no wonder too. Come upstairs and let us see what you will want for your journey." Her tone has grown purposely brisk; surely on an occasion such as this she is a wife, a companion in a thousand. "There must be many things to be considered; both for you and for me. And the thing is, to take nothing unnecessary. Those foreign places, I hear, are so——"

"It hardly matters what I take," says he wearily.

"Well, it matters what *I* take," says she briskly. "Come and give me a help, Freddy. You know how I hate to have servants standing over me. Other people stand over their servants, but they are poor rich people. I like to see how the clothes are packed." She is speaking not quite truthfully. Few people like to be spared trouble so much as she does, but it seems good in her eyes now to rouse him from the melancholy that is fast growing on him. "Come," she says, tucking her arm into his.

## CHAPTER XLI.

" It is not to-morrow ; ah, were it to-day !  
There are two that I know that would be gay,  
Good-bye ! Good-bye ! Good-bye !  
Ah ! parting wounds so bitterly ! "

IT is six weeks later, " Spring has come up this way," and all the earth is glad with a fresh birth.

" Tantarara ! the joyous Book of Spring  
Lies open, writ in blossoms ; not a bird  
Of evil augury is seen or heard !  
Come now, like Pan's old crew we'll dance and sing,  
Or Oberon's, for hill and valley ring  
To March's bugle-horn—earth's blood is stirred."

March has indeed come ; boisterous, wild, terrible, in many ways, but lovely in others. There is a freshness in the air that rouses glad thoughts within the breast, vague thoughts, sweet, as undefinable, and that yet mean life. The whole land seems to have sprung up from a long slumber, and to be looking with wide happy eyes upon the fresh marvels Nature is preparing for it. Rather naked she stands as yet, rubbing her sleepy lids, having just cast from her her coat of snow, and feeling somewhat bare in the frail garment of bursting leaves, and timid grass growths, that as yet is all she can find wherein to hide her charms ; but half clothed as she is, she is still beautiful.

Everything seems full of an eager triumph. Hills, trees, valleys, lawns and bursting streams, all are overflowing with a wild enjoyment. The dull, dingy drapery in which Winter had shrouded them has now been cast aside, and the resplendent furniture with which each Spring delights to deck her home, stands revealed.

All these past dead months her house has lain desolate, enfolded in death's cerements, but now uprising in her vigorous youth, she flings aside the dull coverings, and lets the sweet, brilliant hues that lie beneath, shine forth in all their beauty to meet the eye of day.

Earth and sky are in bridal array, and from the rich recesses

of the woods, and from each shrub and branch the soft glad pæans of the mating birds sound like a wedding chant.

Monkton had come back from that sad journey to Nice some weeks ago. He had had very little to tell on his return, and that of the saddest. It had all been only too true about those iniquitous debts ; and the old people were in great distress. The two town houses should be let at once, and the old place in Warwickshire—the *home*, as he had called it—well ! there was no hope now that it would ever be redeemed from the hands of the Manchester people who held it ; and Sir George had been so sure that this Spring he would have been in a position to get back his own, and have the old place once more in his possession. It was all very sad.

"There is no hope now. He will have to let the place to Barton for the next ten years," said Monkton to his wife when he got home. Barton was the Manchester man. "He is still holding off about doing it, but he knows it must be done, and at all events the reality won't be a bit worse than the thinking about it. Poor old Governor ! You wouldn't know him, Barbara. He has gone to skin and bone, and such a frightened sort of look in his eyes."

"Oh ! poor, *poor* old man !" cried Barbara, who could forget everything in the way of past unkindness where her sympathies were enlisted.

Towards the end of February the guests had begun to arrive at The Court. Lady Baltimore had returned there during January with her little son, but Baltimore had not put in an appearance for some weeks later. A good many new people unknown to the Monktons had arrived there with others, who they did know, and after awhile Dicky Browne had come and Miss Maliphant and the Brabazons and some others with whom Joyce was on friendly terms, but even though Lady Baltimore had made rather a point of the girl's being with her, Joyce had gone to her but sparingly, and always in fear and trembling. It was so impossible to know *who* might not have arrived last night, or was going to arrive *this* night !

Besides, Barbara and Freddy were so saddened, so upset by the late death and its consequences, that it seemed unkind even to pretend to enjoy oneself. Joyce grasped at this excuse to say "no" very often to Lady Baltimore's kindly longings to

have her with her. That, up to this, neither Dysart nor Beauclerk had come to The Court, had been a comfort to her; but that they might come at any moment kept her watchful and uneasy. Indeed only yesterday she had heard from Lady Baltimore that both were expected during the ensuing week.

That news leaves her rather unstrung and nervous to-day. After luncheon, having successfully eluded Tommy the lynx-eyed, she decides upon going for a long walk with a view to working off the depression to which she has become prey. This is how she happens to be out of the way when the letter comes for Barbara that changes altogether the tenour of their lives.

The afternoon post brings it. The delicious Spring day has worn itself almost to a close when Monkton entering his wife's room, where she is busy at a sewing machine, altering a frock for Mabel, drops a letter over her shoulder into her lap.

"What a queer looking letter," says she, staring in amazement at the big official blue envelope.

"Ah—ha, I *thought* it would make you shiver," says he, lounging over to the fire and nestling his back comfortably against the mantel-piece. "What have *you* been up to, I should like to know. No wonder you are turning a lively purple."

"But what can it be?" says she.

"That's just it," says he teasingly. "I *hope* they aren't going to arrest you, that's all. Five years' penal servitude is not a thing to hanker after."

Mrs. Monkton, however, is not listening to this tirade. She has broken open the envelope and is now scanning hurriedly the contents of the important-looking document within. There is a pause—a lengthened one. . . . Presently Barbara rises from her seat, mechanically as it were, always with her eyes fixed on the letter in her hand. She has grown a little pale—a little puzzled frown is contracting her forehead.

"Freddy!" says she in a rather strange tone.

"What?" says he quickly. "No *more* bad news I hope."

"Oh no! Oh *yes*! I can't quite make it out—but—I'm afraid my poor uncle is dead."

"Your uncle?"

"Yes, yes. My father's brother. I think I told you about him. He went abroad years ago, and we—Joyce and I, believed

him dead a long time ago, long before I married *you* even—but now—. Come here and read it. It is worded so oddly that it puzzles me."

"Let me see it," says Monkton.

He sinks into an easy chair, and drags her down on to his knee, the better to see over her shoulder. Thus satisfactorily arranged, he begins to read rapidly the letter she holds up before his eyes.

"Yes, dead indeed," says he *sotto voce*. "Go on, turn over; you mustn't fret about *that* you know, Barbara—er—er—" reading. "What's this? *By Jove!*"

"What" says his wife anxiously. "What is the meaning of this horrid letter, Freddy?"

"There are a few people who might not call it horrid," says Monkton, placing his arm round her, and rising from the chair. He is looking very grave. "Even though it brings you news of your poor uncle's death, still—it brings you too the information that you are heiress to about a quarter of a million!"

"What!" says Barbara faintly. And then, "Oh no. Oh! nonsense! there must be some mistake!"

"Well, it *sounds* like it at all events. 'Sad occurrence,' h'm —h'm—" reading. "'Co-heiresses. Very considerable fortune.'" He looks to the signature of the letter. "Hodgson and Fair. Very respectable firm! My father has had dealings with them. They say your uncle died in Sydney, and has left behind him an immense sum of money. Half a million, in fact, to which you and Joyce are co-heiresses."

"There must be a mistake," repeats Barbara, in a low tone. "It seems too like a fairy tale."

"It does. And yet, lawyers like Hodgson and Fair are not likely to be led into a *cul-de-sac*. If—" he pauses, and looks earnestly at his wife. "If it does prove true, Barbara, you will be a very rich woman."

"And you will be rich *with* me," says she, quickly, in an agitated tone. "But, but—"

"Yes; it does seem difficult to believe," interrupts he, slowly. "What a letter!" His eyes fall on it again, and she, drawing close to him, reads it once more, carefully.

"I think there is truth in it," says she, at last. "It sounds

more like being all right, more *reasonable*, when read a second time. Freddy——”

She steps a little bit away from him, and rests her beautiful eyes full on his.

“Have you thought,” says she, slowly, “that if there is truth in this story, how much we shall be able to do for your father and mother !”

Monkton starts as if stung. For *them*. To do anything for them. For the two who had so wantonly offended and insulted her during all her married life. Is her first thought to be for *them* ?

“Yes, yes,” says she, eagerly. “We shall be able to help them out of all their difficulties. Oh ! I didn’t *say* much to you, but their grief, their troubles, have gone to my very heart. I couldn’t *bear* to think of their being obliged to give up their houses, their comforts, and in their old age, too ! Now, we shall be able to smooth matters for them !”

## CHAPTER XLII.

“ It’s we two, it’s we two, it’s we two for aye,  
All the world and we two, and Heaven be our stay,  
Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride !  
All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his sirlie.”

THE light in her eyes is angelic. She has laid her hands upon both her husband’s arms, as if expecting him to take her into them as he always does only too gladly on the smallest provocation. Just now, however, he fails her, for the moment only, however.

“Barbara,” says he, in a choked voice ; he holds her from him, examining her face critically. His thoughts are painful, yet proud—proud beyond telling. His examination does not last long ; there is nothing but good to be read in that fair, sweet, lovable face. He gathers her to him with a force that is almost hurtful.

“Are you a woman at all, or just an angel ?” says he with a deep sigh.

“What is it, Freddy ?”

“After all they have done to you. Their insults, coldness, *abominable* conduct, to think that your first thought should be

for them. Why look here, Barbara," vehemently, "they are not worthy that you should——"

"Tut!" interrupts she, lightly, yet with a little sob in her throat. His praise is so sweet to her. "You over-rate me. Is it for them I would do it or for *you*? There, take all the thought for yourself. And, besides, are not you and I one, and shall not your people be my people. Come, if you think of it, there is no such great merit after all."

"You forget——"

"No; not a word against them. I won't listen," thrusting her fingers into her ears. "It is all over and done with long ago. And it is our turn now; and let us do things decently, and in order, and create no heartburnings."

"But when I think——"

"If thinking makes you look like that, *don't* think."

"But I must. I must remember how they scorned and slighted you. It never seems to have come home to me so vividly as now—now when you seem to have forgotten it. Oh, Barbara!" He presses back her head and looks long and tenderly into her eyes. "I was not mistaken, indeed, when I gave you my heart. Surely you are one amongst ten thousand."

"Silly boy," says she, with a little tremulous laugh; glad to her very soul's centre, however, because of his words. "What is there to praise me for? Have I not warned you that I am purely selfish? What is there I would not do for very love of you? Come, Freddy," shaking herself loose from him, and laughing now with honest delight. "Let us be reasonable. Oh! poor old uncle, it seems hateful to rejoice thus over his death, but his memory is really only a shadow after all, and I suppose he meant to make us happy by his gift, eh, Freddy?"

"Yes. How well he remembered during all these years. He could have formed no other ties."

"None, naturally." Short pause. "There is that black mare of Mike Donovan's, Freddy, that you so fancied. You can buy it now."

Monkton laughs involuntarily. Something of the child has always lingered about Barbara.

"And I should like to get a black velvet gown," says she, her face brightening, "and to buy Joyce a—— Oh! but Joyce will be rich herself."

"Yes. I'm really afraid you will be done out of the joy of overloading Joyce with gifts ; she'll be able to give *you* something. That will be a change at all events. As for the velvet gown, if this," touching the letter, "bears any meaning, I should think you need not confine yourself to *one* velvet gown."

"And there's Tommy," says she quickly, her thoughts running so quickly that she scarcely hears him. "You have always said you wanted to put him in the army. "Now you can do it."

"Yes," says Monkton, with sudden interest. "I *should* like that. But you—you shrank from the thought, didn't you."

"Well, he might have to go to India," says she nervously.

"And what of that?"

"Oh, nothing—that is nothing really—only there are lions and tigers there, Freddy ; *aren't* there now ?"

"One or two," says Mr. Monkton, "if we are to believe traveller's tales. But they are all proverbially false. I don't believe in lions at all, myself. I'm sure they are myths. Well, let him go into the navy then. Lions and tigers don't as a rule inhabit the great deep."

"Oh, no ; but *sharks* do," says she, with a visible shudder. "No, no, on the whole I had rather trust him to the beasts of the field. He could run away from them, but you *can't* run in the sea."

"True," says Mr. Monkton, with exemplary gravity. "I couldn't, at all events."

\* \* \* \* \*

Monkton had to run across to London about the extraordinary legacy left to his wife and Joyce. But further investigation proved the story true. The money was, indeed, there, and they were the only heirs. From being distinctly poor, they rose to the height of a very respectable income, and Monkton being in Town, where the old Monktons still were, also was commanded by his wife to go to them and pay off their largest liabilities—debts contracted by the dead son, and to so arrange that they should not be at the necessity of leaving themselves houseless.

The Manchester people who had taken the old place in Warwickshire were now informed that they could not have it beyond the term agreed upon, but about this the old people had something to say too. They would not take back the family

place. They had but one son now, and the sooner he went to live there the better. Lady Monkton, completely broken down and melted by Barbara's generosity, went so far as to send her a long letter, telling her it would be the dearest wish of hers and Sir George's hearts that *she* should preside as mistress over the beautiful old homestead, and that it would give them great happiness to imagine the children—the *grandchildren*—running riot through the big wainscotted rooms. Barbara was not to wait for her—Lady Monkton's—death to take up her position as head of the house. She was to go to Warwickshire at once, the moment those detestable Manchester people were out of it, and Lady Monkton, if Barbara would be so good as to make her welcome, would like to come to her for three months every year, to see the children and her son, and her *daughter*! The last was the crowning touch. For the rest, Barbara was not to hesitate about accepting the Warwickshire place, as Lady Monkton and Sir George were devoted to Town life, and never felt quite well when away from smoky London.

This last was true. As a fact the old people were thoroughly imbued with a desire for the turmoil of city life, and the three months of country Lady Monkton had stipulated for, were quite as much as they desired of rustic felicity.

Barbara accepted the gift of the old home. Eventually, of course, it would be hers, but she knew the old people meant the present giving of it as a sort of return for her liberality—for the generosity that had enabled them to once more lift their heads amongst their equals.

\* \* \* \* \*

The great news meanwhile had spread like wildfire through the Irish county where the Frederic Monktons lived. Lady Baltimore was unspeakably glad about it, and came down at once to embrace Barbara, and say all sorts of delightful things about it. The excitement of the whole affair seemed to dissipate all the sadness and depression that had followed on the death of the elder son, and nothing now was talked of but the great good luck that had fallen into the paths of Barbara and Joyce. The poor old uncle had been considered dead for so many years previously, and was indeed such a dim memory to his nieces that it would have been the purest affectation to pretend to feel any deep grief for his demise.

Perhaps what grieved Barbara most of all, though she said very little about it, was the idea of having to leave the old house in which they were now living. It did not cheer her to think of the place in Warwickshire which, of course, was beautiful, and full of possibilities.

This foolish old Irish home—rich in discomforts—*was* home. It seemed hard to abandon it. It was not a palatial mansion, certainly; it was even dismal in many ways, but it contained more love in its little space than many a noble mansion could boast. It seemed cruel—ungrateful—to cast it behind her, once it was possible to her to mount a few steps higher on the rungs of the worldly ladder.

How happy they had all been here together, in this foolish old house that every severe storm seemed to threaten with final dissolution. It gave her many a secret pang to think that she must part from it for ever before another year should dawn.

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### CHAPTER XLIII.

" Looks the heart alone discover,  
If the tongue its thoughts can tell,  
'Tis in vain you play the lover,  
You have never *felt* the spell."

JOYCE, who had been dreading, with a silent but terrible fear, her first meeting with Dysart, had found it no such great matter after all when at last they were face to face. Dysart had met her as coolly, with apparently as little concern as though no former passages had ever taken place between them.

His manner was perfectly calm, and as devoid of feeling as anyone could desire, and it was open to her comprehension that he avoided her whenever he possibly could. She told herself this was all she could, or did, desire; yet, nevertheless, she writhed beneath the certainty of it.

Beauleirk had not arrived until a week later than Dysart; until, indeed, the news of the marvellous fortune that had come to her was well authenticated, and then had been all that could possibly be expected of him. His manner was perfect. He still sat and gazed with delightfully friendly eyes into Miss Maliphant's pleased countenance, and anon skimmed across room

or lawn to whisper beautiful nothings to Miss Kavanagh. The latter's change of fortune did not, apparently, seem to affect him in the least. After all, even now, she was not so good a *parti* as Miss Maliphant where money was concerned, but then there were other things. Whatever his outward manner might lead one to suspect, beyond doubt he thought a great deal at this time, and finally came to a conclusion.

Joyce's fortune had helped *her* in many ways ; it had helped many of the poor around her too, but it did even more than that—it helped Mr. Beauclerk to make up his mind with regard to his matrimonial prospects.

Sitting in his chambers in Town with Lady Baltimore's letter before him that told him of the change in Joyce's fortune —of the fortune that had changed her, in fact, from a pretty, penniless girl to a pretty rich one, he told himself that, after all, she had certainly been the girl for *him*, since the commencement of their acquaintance.

She was charming—not a whit more now than then. He would not belie his own taste so far as to admit that she was more desirable in any way now, in her prosperity, than when first he saw her, and paid her the immense compliment of admiring her.

He permitted himself to grow a little enthusiastic, however, to say out loud to himself as it were, all that he had hardly allowed himself to think up to this. She was, beyond question, *the* most charming girl in the world ! Such grace—such finish ! A girl worthy of the love of the best of men — presumably himself !

He had always loved her—always ! He had never felt so sure of that delightful fact as *now*. He had had a kind of knowledge, even when afraid to give ear to it, that she was the wife best suited to him to be found anywhere. She *understood* him ! They were thoroughly *en rapport* with each other. Their marriage would be a success in the deepest, sincerest meaning of that word.

He leaned luxuriously amongst the cushions of his chair, lit a fragrant cigarette, and ran his mind backwards over many things. Well ! *Perhaps* so ! But yet if he *had* refrained from proposing to her until now—now when Fate smiles upon her—it was simply because he dreaded dragging her into a marriage where she could

not have had all those little best things of life that so peerless a creature had every right to demand.

Yes! It was for her sake alone he had hesitated. He feels sure of that now. He has thoroughly persuaded himself of the purity of the motives that kept him tongue-tied when honour called aloud to him for speech. He feels himself so exalted that he metaphorically pats himself upon the back and tells himself he is a righteous being—a very Brutus where honour is concerned; any other man might have hurried that exquisite creature into a squalid marriage for the mere sake of gratifying an overpowering affection, but *he* had been above all that! He had considered *her*! The man's duty is ever to protect the woman! He had protected *her*—even from herself; for that she would have been only too willing to link her sweet fate with his at any price, was patent to all the world. Few people have felt as virtuous as Mr. Beauclerk as he comes to the end of *this* thread of his imaginings.

Well! He will make it up to her! He smiles benignly through the smoke that rises round his nose. She shall never have reason to remember that he had not fallen on his knees to her—as a less considerate man might have done—when he was without the means to make her life as bright as it should be.

The most eager of lovers must live, and eating is the first move towards that conclusion. Yet if he had given way to selfish desires they would scarcely, he and she, have had sufficient bread (of any delectable kind) to fill their mouths. But now, all would be different. She, clever girl! had supplied the blank; she had squared the difficulty. Having provided the wherewithal to keep body and soul together in a nice, respectable, fashionable, modern sort of way, her constancy shall certainly be rewarded. He will go straight down to The Court, and declare to her the sentiments that have been warming his breast (silently!) all these past months. What a *dear* girl she is, and so *fond* of him. That in itself is an extra charm in her very delightful character. And those fortunate thousands! Quite a quarter of a million, isn't it? Well, of course, no use saying they won't come in handy—no use being hypocritical over it—horrid thing a hypocrite!—well, those thousands naturally have their charm too.

He rose ; flung his cigarette aside (it was finished as far as careful enjoyment would permit) and rang for his servant to pack his portmanteaux. He was going to The Court by the morning train.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now that he is here, however, he restrains the ardour that no doubt is consuming him, with altogether admirable patience, and waits for the chance that may permit him to lay his valuable affections at Joyce's feet. A dinner to be followed by an impromptu dance at The Court suggests itself as a very fitting opportunity. He grasps it. Yes, to-morrow evening will be an excellent and artistic opening for a thing of this sort. All through luncheon, even whilst conversing with Joyce and Miss Maliphant on various outside topics, his versatile mind is arranging a picturesque spot in the garden enclosures wherein to make Joyce a happy woman !

Lady Swansdown, glancing across the table at him, laughs lightly. Always disliking him, she has still been able to read him very clearly, and his determination to now propose to Joyce amuses her nearly as much as it annoys her. Frivolous to the last degree as she is, an honest regard for Joyce has taken hold within her breast. Lord Baltimore too is disturbed by his brother's present attitude, yet a feeling that Joyce is equal to the struggle comforts her. She sighs, however, as she looks at her. Life to Lady Baltimore has become a terrible thing. It was bad before—but now—*lately*— It is vain to try to conceal from herself that the flirtation between her husband and her whilom friend, Lady Swansdown, is gaining ground every day. A sad and scornful submission to her fate is all that is left her, and yet—it is so hard to submit.

Perhaps, of all those round her, Dicky Browne is the one who sees most of Lady Baltimore's trouble, and whilst disbelieving in any very serious attachment between Baltimore and Lady Swansdown, is still secretly incensed at the indignity put upon Isabel, of whom he is extremely fond in his own odd, desultory way. He had even gone so far yesterday as to hint about it to Beauclerk, who as Lady Baltimore's brother might, he thought, reasonably be supposed to have her interests at heart.

In this, however, he found himself lamentably mistaken. Beauclerk had stared at him in a gentlemanly sort of way, as if

he had seven heads. He seemed, indeed, horrified at Dicky's bad taste in bringing up an affair of this kind to the common light of day ; such an ordinary affair too ! What the deuce did the fellow mean ?

" *You* should interfere," said Dicky Browne stoutly, unimpressed by the gentlemanly stare. " A word or two to Baltimore would arrange it. I don't believe he cares a screw about—the other."

" My dear fellow, I *never* interfere !" said Beauclerk icily, whereon Dicky, with an indignant twist of his shoulder, had left him.

Something at luncheon to-day, a little touch of coquetry on the part of Lady Swansdown, had set his anger going again. And an hour later, happening to pass through one of the conservatories he is still further incensed by a vision of Baltimore leaning over Lady Swansdown in a half careless, half lover-like attitude. Even as Dicky hesitates whether to withdraw noiselessly, or bring a flower-pot to the ground with a loud clangour, Baltimore stooping, presses his lips to his pretty companion's hand, and with a light laugh runs down the conservatory steps to the garden outside.

Dicky, after a second's consideration, goes forward, and almost before Lady Swansdown has time to realize his approach drops into the seat just vacated by Baltimore.

" I say," says he deliberately, " I'd chuck it up if I were you."

" Would you ? " says Lady Swansdown with admirable unconcern, though her heart has begun to beat with some rapidity. " Chuck up what, however ? My acquaintance with *you* ? "

" Not a bit of it," says Mr. Browne quite as coolly, being unmoved by this counter attack, " you daren't do that. I shouldn't survive it, and I suppose you don't want to have murder on your soul. However, as that dear old frugal proverb advises us, to waste nothing, lest we should want it later on, I'll allow your question to stand, merely suggesting that you should substitute for my name that of Baltimore ! If you will put it again *that* way, I'll say ' yes ' to it."

Lady Swansdown laughs, but the laugh is vague, a little overdone ; and without the usual ring.

" I should hate to think your intellect was failing," says she. " But is there any meaning in your words ? "

"A great deal," says Mr. Browne suavely. He draws his chair rather closer to hers.

"Yes? Really? I am afraid, however, you would have to alter more words than the one you mention. 'Acquaintance' for example. That might do very well where you are concerned, but I assure you what I feel for Lord Baltimore is sincere friendship."

"Is it?" says Dicky mildly. That's a little rough on me, isn't it? especially as you *know* I'm very devoted to you; whereas Baltimore—is he devoted to you?"

This barbed arrow reaches its home. Lady Swansdown's colour grows more brilliant, and then fades away into nothingness. She is now indeed very pale.

"You mean——?" says she slowly.

"Hardly anything," says he. "The whole thing really is not worth a discussion—but——"

"Go on," says she with a little impatient frowning glance. "You think that——"

"I don't *think* about it," says Mr. Browne plaintively, "I know what I am speaking about. All the world knows it too."

"Knows *what*? Take care Dicky!" says she with a flash from her large eyes.

"That I adore you!" says Mr. Browne with a mournful shake of his head. "Hopelessly, I admit, whereas Baltimore——"

"Well?" with a short, but now unmistakable touch of defiance.

"All the world knows too—at least the intelligent part of it—that he is silly enough to adore his own wife! A pity this fact has not come home to him! Really he goes about as if he were ignorant of it."

Lady Swandown leans back in her chair, and a rather wild little burst of mirth breaks from her.

"And *she*?" she asks, with a sidelong glance at Dicky.

"Isabel you mean? Give her a chance," says he slowly, earnestly.

"Ah! you would appeal to me after deriding me?"

"I would only remind you that you have a good heart," says he quickly. "As for Baltimore, he is a fool."

"Well, you are not so," says she with a bitter little laugh. "And now—do you think you could go away, Dicky? I con-

fess I have had enough of you and your smart sayings, for a little while at all events."

"Why don't you say at once that you want to go to sleep," says Mr. Browne, ignoring cleverly her agitation. "Women always go to sleep, don't they, when they are left alone? I expect you want to slip up to your room, and get an extra beauty sleep, so as to eclipse all the others this evening. Rather mean of you isn't it—considering you can do it without any trouble? *You want nothing.*"

"For once you are at fault," says she, looking at him through half lowered lids. Her beautiful lips have taken a contemptuous curve, yet in reality the contempt is more for herself than her companion.

"Never mind, one likes new sensations," says Dicky cheerfully. "However, I still cling to my first belief, and I may as well give you before I go a home thrust."

"What, another?" says she smiling indifferently.

"*A first surely.*"

"Well, what is it? You are so bent on being unpleasant that it would be a pity to prevent you. *Do* say it and get it over," says she with a shrug. He always wondered afterwards why she had borne with him so long.

"In what mad haste to be rid of me," says he, rising to his feet, tearful reproach in his voice. "Hear me then! I think it cruel of you, who are peerless amongst your fellows, to seek to gain an advantage over another." He pauses—long enough to know that she quite understands him. "Nature has given you so many charms, that you can afford to be magnanimous."

"Nature has given me amongst them an excellent temper," says she indolently. "*You*, at all events, must admit that. As for my charms—really, where are they? Of what use are they to me? Barren—all barren! They bring me no luck."

"They have brought you *me!*!" says Mr. Browne, with heavy emphasis.

"Ah!" says she, with emphasis of her own quite as heavy, "That's what I say; they have brought me—no luck:" this is unkind. "Good Dicky," says she languidly, "*may* I be alone for a while?"

"After *that*, certainly, so far as I am concerned," says Mr. Browne, rising with all the appearance of one wounded to the

death. " Still, a last word," says he. " If you *must* snooze, don't do it *here*, I beseech you, people come and go and——"

" Be happy about that. I shan't sleep here or anywhere else," interrupts she, a little sadly perhaps in spite of her laughing mouth. " There, *go*! Let me forget you and your platitudes for awhile if I can."

She waves him from her, and sinking back into the cosy chair in which she is sitting, gives way to one cankered thought.

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#### CHAPTER XLIV.

" Love took up the harp of life, and smote on all the chords with might,  
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight."

SHE is startled into a remembrance of the present by the entrance of somebody. After all, Dicky the troublesome was right. *This* is no spot in which to sleep or dream in. Turning her head with an indolent impatience, to see who has come to disturb her, she meets Lady Baltimore's clear eyes.

Some sharp pang of remorse, or *fear* perhaps, compels her to spring to her feet, and gaze at her hostess with an expression that is almost defiant. Dicky's words so far had taken effect, that she now dreads and *hates* to meet the woman who once had been her staunch friend.

Lady Baltimore, unable to ignore the look in her rival's eyes, still advances towards her with unfaltering step. Perhaps a touch of disdain, of contempt, is perceptible in her own gaze because Lady Swansdown, paling, moves towards *her*. She seems to have lost all self-control. She is trembling violently; it is a crisis.

" What is it? " says Lady Swansdown harshly. " Why do you look at me like that? Has it come to a close between us, Isabel? Oh, if so," vehemently, " it is *better* so."

" I don't think I understand you, " says Lady Baltimore, who has grown very white. Her tone is haughty, she has drawn back a little as if to escape from contact with the other.

" Ah, that is so like you, " says Lady Swansdown with a rather fierce little laugh. " You pretend, pretend, pretend, from morning till night. You entrench yourself behind your pride, and——"

" You know what you are doing, Beatrice ? " says Lady Baltimore, ignoring this outburst completely, and speaking in a calm level tone, yet with a face like marble.

" Yes, and you know too," says Lady Swansdown. Then, with an overwhelming vehemence, " Why don't you do something ? Why don't you assert yourself ? "

" I shall *never* assert myself," says Lady Baltimore slowly.

" You mean that whatever comes you will not interfere."

" That, exactly," turning her eyes full on the other's face with a terrible disdain. " I shall never interfere in this—or *any other* of his flirtations."

It is a sharp stab ! Lady Swansdown winces visibly.

" What a woman you are," cries she. " Have you ever thought of it, Isabel ? You are unjust to him, unfair. You," passionately, " treat him as though he were the dust beneath your feet, and yet you expect him to remain immaculate for your sake, pure as any acolyte—a thing of ice——"

" No," coldly. " You mistake me. I know too much of him to expect perfection, nay, common decency, from him. But *you*, it was *you* whom I hoped to find immaculate."

" You expect too much then. One iceberg in your midst is enough, and that you have kindly supplied in your own person. Put me out of the discussion altogether."

" Ah, you have made that impossible. I cannot do that. I have known you too long, I have liked you too well. I have," with a swift, but terrible, glance at her, "*loved you !*"

" *Isabel !*"

" No, no, not a word. It is too late now."

" True," says Lady Swansdown, bringing back the arms she had extended, and letting them fall with a sudden dull vehemence to her sides. Her agitation is uncontrolled. " That was so long ago, that no doubt you have forgotten all about it. You," bitterly, " have forgotten a good deal."

" And you," says Lady Baltimore very calmly. " What is it you have *not* forgotten—your self-respect," deliberately, " amongst other things."

" Take care, take care !" says Lady Swansdown in a low tone. She has turned furiously upon her.

" Why should I take care ? " She throws up her small head scornfully. " Have I said one word too much ? "

"Too much, indeed!" says Lady Swansdown, distinctly, but faintly. She turns her head, but not her eyes, in Isabel's direction. "I am afraid you will have to endure me for one day longer," she says in a low voice. "After that, you shall bid me a farewell that will last for ever!"

"You have come to a wise decision," says Lady Baltimore immovably.

There is something so contemptuous in her whole bearing that it maddens the other.

"How *dare* you speak to me like that?" cries she with sudden violence, not to be repressed. "You, of all others! Do you think you are not in fault at all? that you stand blameless before the world?"

The blood has flamed into her pale cheeks, her eyes are on fire. She advances towards Lady Baltimore with such a passion of angry despair in look and tone, and involuntarily the latter retreats before her.

"Who shall blame me?" demands Lady Baltimore, haughtily.

"I—I for one. Icicle that you are, how can you know what love means? You have no heart to feel, no longing to forgive And what has he done to you—nothing, *nothing* that any other woman would not gladly condone."

"You are a partisan," says Lady Baltimore coldly. "You would plead his cause and to *me*. You are violent, but that does not put you in the right. What do *you* know of Baltimore that I do not know. By what right do you defend him?"

"There is such a thing as friendship."

"Is there?" says the other with deep meaning. "Is there, Beatrice? Oh think, *think!*" A little bitter smile curls the corners of her lips. "That *you* should advocate the cause of friendship to *me*," says she, her words falling with cruel scorn, one by one, slowly from her lips.

"You think me false," says Lady Swansdown. She is terribly agitated. "There *was* an old friendship between us. I know that—I *feel* it; you think me altogether false to it?"

"I think of you as little as I can help," says Isabel contemptuously. "Why should I waste a thought on you?"

"True. Why indeed! One so capable of controlling her emotions as you are, need never give way to superfluous or useless thoughts. Still, give one to Baltimore. It is our last

conversation together, therefore bear with me—hear me. All his sins lie in the past. He——”

“ You must be *mad* to talk to me like this,” interrupts Isabel, flushing crimson. “ Has he asked you to intercede for him? *Could* even *he* go so far as that? Is it a last insult? What are *you* to him, that you thus adopt his cause. *Answer* me!” cries she imperiously; all her coldness, all her stern determination to suppress herself seems broken up.

“ Nothing!” returns Lady Swansdown, becoming calmer as she notes the other’s growing vehemence. “ I never shall be anything. I have but one excuse for my interference——.” She pauses.

“ And that?”

“ *I love him!*” steadily, but faintly. Her eyes have sought the ground.

“ *Ah!*” says Lady Baltimore.

“ It is true,” slowly. “ It is equally true—that he—does not love me. Let me then speak. All his sins, believe me, lie behind him. That woman, that friend of yours, who told you of his renewed acquaintance with Madame Istray, lied to you! There was no truth in what she said.”

“ I can quite understand *your* not wishing to believe in that story,” says Lady Baltimore with an undisguised sneer.

“ Like all good women you can take pleasure in inflicting a wound,” says Lady Swansdown, controlling herself admirably; “ but do not let your detestation of me blind you to the fact that my words contain truth. If you will listen, I can——”

“ Not a word,” says Lady Baltimore, making a movement with her hand as if to efface the other. “ I will have none of your confidences.”

“ It seems to me,” quickly, “ you are determined *not* to believe.”

“ You are at liberty to think as you will.”

“ The time may come when you will regret you did not listen to me to-day.”

“ Is that a threat?”

“ No; but I am going. There will be no further opportunity for you to hear me.”

“ You must pardon me if I say that I am glad of that,” says Lady Baltimore, her very lips white. “ I could have borne little

more. *Do what you will. Go where you will, with whom you will*" (with deliberate insult), "but at least spare me a repetition of such a scene as this."

She turns, and with an indescribably haughty gesture leaves the room.

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### CHAPTER XLV.

"The name of the slough was Despond."

DANCING is going on in the small drawing-room. A few night broughams are still arriving, and young girls, accompanied by their brothers only, are making the room look lovely. It is quite an impromptu affair, quite informal. Dicky Browne, altogether in his element, is flitting from flower to flower, saying beautiful nothings to any of the girls who are kind enough or silly enough to waste a moment on so irreclaimable a butterfly.

He is not so entirely engrossed by his pleasing occupation, however, as to be lost to the more serious matters that are going on around him. He is specially struck by the fact that Lady Swansdown, who had been in charming spirits all through the afternoon, and afterwards at dinner, is now dancing a great deal with Beauclerk—of all people—and making herself, apparently, very delightful to him. His own personal belief up to this had been that she detested Beauclerk, and now, to see her smiling upon him and favouring him with waltz after waltz, upsets Dicky's powers of penetration to an almost fatal extent.

"I wonder what the deuce she's up to now," says he to himself, leaning against the wall behind him, and giving voice unconsciously to the thoughts within him.

"Eh," says somebody at his ear.

He looks round hastily to find Miss Maliphant has come to anchor on his left, and that her eyes too are directed on Beauclerk, who, with Lady Swansdown, is standing at the lower end of the room.

"Eh, to *you*," says he brilliantly.

"I always rather fancied that Mr. Beauclerk and Lady Swansdown were antipathetic," says Miss Maliphant in her usual heavy downright way.

"There was room for it," says Mr. Browne gloomily.

"For it?"

"Your fancy."

"Yes; so I think. Lady Swansdown has always seemed to me to be rather—rather—Eh?"

"Decidedly so," agrees Mr. Browne. "And as for Beauclerk, he is quite too dreadfully 'rather,' don't you think?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. He has often seemed to me a little light, but only on the surface."

"You've read him," says Mr. Browne with a confidential nod; "light on the surface, but deep, deep as a draw-well!"

"I don't think I mean what you do," says Miss Maliphant quickly. "However, we are not discussing Mr. Beauclerk, beyond the fact that I wonder to see him so genial with Lady Swansdown. They *used* to be thoroughly antagonistic, and now—why they seem quite good friends, don't they? Quite thick, eh?" with her usual graceful phraseology.

"Thick as thieves in Vallambrosa?" says Mr. Browne with increasing gloom. Miss Maliphant turns to regard him doubtfully.

"Leaves," suggests she.

"Thieves," persists he immovably.

"Oh! Ah! It's a joke, perhaps," says she, the doubt growing.

Mr. Browne fixes a stern eye upon her.

"Is thy servant a dog?" says he, and stalks indignantly away, leaving Miss Maliphant in the throes of uncertainty.

"Yet I'm *sure* it wasn't the right word," says she to herself, with a gathering frown of perplexity. "However, I may be wrong. I often *am*. And after all, Spain we're told is full of 'em."

Whether "thieves" or "leaves," she doesn't explain; and presently indeed her mind wanders entirely away from Mr. Browne's maunderings to the subject that so much more nearly interests her. Beauclerk has not been quite so *empresé* in his manner to her to-night—not so altogether delightful. He has indeed, it seems to her, shirked her society a good deal, and has not been so assiduous about the scribbling of his name upon her card as usual; and then this sudden friendship with Lady Swansdown—what does he mean by that? What does *she* mean?"

If she had only known. If the answer to her latter question had been given to her, her mind would have grown easier, and

the idea of Lady Swansdown in the form of a rival would have been laid at rest for ever.

As a fact Lady Swansdown hardly understands herself to-night. That scene with her hostess has upset her mentally and bodily, and created in her a wild desire to get away from *herself*—and from Baltimore—at any cost. Some idle freak has induced her to use Beauclerk (who is detestable to her) as a safe-guard from both, and he, unsettled in his own mind, and eager to come to conclusions with Joyce and her fortune, has lent himself to the wiles of his whilom foe, and is permitting himself to be charmed by her fascinating, if vagrant, mood.

Perhaps in all her life Lady Swansdown has never looked so lovely as to-night. Excitement and mental disturbance have lent a dangerous brilliancy to her eyes, a touch of colour to her cheek. There is something electric about her that moves those who gaze on her, and warns herself that a crisis is at hand.

Up to this she has been able to elude all Baltimore's attempts at conversation—has refused all his demands for a dance. Yet, the sure knowledge that the night will not go by without a denouement of some kind between her and him is terribly present to her.

To-night! The last night she will ever see him, in all human probability! The exaltation that enables her to endure this thought is fraught with such agony that, brave and determined as she is, it is almost too much for her.

Yet *she*—Isabel—she should learn that that old friendship between them was no fable. To-night it would bear fruit. False, she believed her—! Well, she should see.

In a way, she clung to Beauclerk as a means of escaping Baltimore. Throwing out a thousand wiles to chain him to her side, and succeeding. Three times she had given a smiling “No,” to Lord Baltimore's demand for a dance, and regardless of opinion had flung herself into a wild and open flirtation with Beauclerk.

But it is growing towards midnight, and her strength is failing her. These people—will they *never* go? Will she never be able to seek her own room, and solitude, and despair, without calling down comment on her head, and giving Isabel, that cold woman, the chance of sneering at her weakness?

A sudden sense of the uselessness of it all has taken possession

of her. Her heart sinks. It is at this moment that Baltimore once more comes up to her.

"This dance?" says he. "It is half-way through. You are not engaged, I suppose, as you are sitting down. May I have what remains of it?"

She makes a little gesture of acquiescence, and rising, places her hand upon his arm.

(*To be continued.*)



### Prosper Mérimée.

WHEN describing the character of Saint-Clair, in the *Vase Étrusque*, no one doubts that Mérimée is penning a portrait of himself. "By nature he was tender-hearted; but at an age when one is most easily impressed his excessive sensibility led him to shrink from the raillery of his comrades. He was proud, ambitious; and he stuck to his opinion with the obstinacy of a child . . . Through his resolution to trust no one he felt his troubles a hundred times more acutely. He was looked upon by the world as *insouciant*—devoid of emotion. When alone he experienced greater pain than he would have done had he taken some one into his confidence." This reserve which gradually developed into a sort of morbid scepticism was enhanced by the influence of Henri Beyle—best known under the pseudonym of Stendhal—whom Mérimée ardently admired, if he did not actually regard him as his master. Although a member of the French Bar Mérimée never practised; for he was left in easy circumstances, and soon found congenial employment. He became inspector of historic monuments, obtained a place in the senate, and then at court. As an official he was not only competent, but proved himself eminently useful. He acquired a remarkable knowledge of antiquities, studying all the old churches on the spot, and with the aid of the best architects. In the senate he had the tact to be frequently absent, or when "in the house," refrained from speaking. At court he was in his true element. He took a keen interest in men and things: and in his travels to the East, his frequent journeys through Corsica, Spain and Greece, nothing seemed to escape

his observation. He was in England more than a dozen times, always noting the manners and customs, not only of the aristocracy, but even the lowest classes. “*J'ai mangé plus d'une fois à la gamelle avec des gens qu'un Anglais ne regarderait pas, de peur de perdre le respect qu'il a pour son propre œil. J'ai bu à la même outre qu'un galérien.*” He even lived on familiar terms with gitanos and toreadors; but the place in which he was most at home, was in a Spanish *venta* with “*des muletières et des paysannes d'Andalousie.*” He was always searching for *des types*, and by degrees he collected the gallery of living characters which are to be found in his works. He mastered six languages, with the history and literature of each; and he spoke *calo* with an accent which even astonished the gipsies of Spain.

While reading the *Nouvelles*—stories which seldom exceed a dozen pages—this exceptional culture and rare knowledge of men is always apparent. He has prided himself on his *couleur locale*; and certainly his descriptions of scenery in Corsica, Russia and Spain, are exceedingly graphic. The passions and brutal instincts which are always at work in human nature are touched upon with a master hand. Mérimée plays with life and death; and yet there is a soberness and even simplicity in his style which reminds one of Voltaire and Le Sage: though Mérimée is perhaps more polished, more premeditated, than either the author of *Zadig* or *Gil Blas*. Nothing that is essential is ever omitted in his tales: nothing superfluous is introduced. There is a strange mixture of realism, naturalism and even pessimism in his writings; and yet he is so perfect an artist that he seldom loses control over the materials which he has the power and courage to employ.

*Mateo Falcone*, a Corsican tale, is the best among Mérimée's *Nouvelles*. Mateo is a brigand. On a certain day in autumn he starts off with his wife to visit his flocks, and leaves his son, Fortunato, a promising youth of ten, to look after the house. Fortunato is lying half-asleep in the sun when he is roused by the report of a musket; and presently he sees a man in rags limping towards him. This man proves to be a bandit who has fallen in the way of some Corsican *voltigeurs* and is making an attempt to escape in spite of the wound which one of them has inflicted. He implores the boy to conceal him: he can go

no further. Fortunato consents : he makes a hole in a haystack near the house, and there he hides the man ; but not until he has wheedled the bandit out of a five-franc piece. Presently six soldiers, commanded by an adjutant, stop at the door of Mateo's house. The scene that now takes place between the adjutant and Fortunato is very dramatic : and it ends by the boy proving a traitor ; for he is persuaded by the tempting offer of the adjutant's watch and chain to reveal the man's place of concealment. No sooner is this nefarious bargain concluded than Mateo and his wife make their appearance. The father quickly becomes acquainted with his son's treachery. He once more shoulders his gun, and retraces his steps towards the hills, telling Fortunato to follow him. The wife goes indoors and throws herself down grief-stricken before an image of the Virgin. The father and son reach a small ravine. "*Dis tes prières,*" says Mateo. The child obeys. When he has finished the *Ave Maria* the father sinks upon his knee while muttering, "*Que Dieu te pardonne !*" He lifts his rifle, fires, and the son falls dead at his feet. This Corsican brigand regards treason as a crime : he thinks nothing of committing a murder. In another short tale, of some half dozen pages like the preceding one, called the *Enlèvement d'une Redoute*, Prosper Mérimée has described a battle scene in his most vivid style. Nothing finer of the kind has been written. "I raised my eyes, and never shall I forget the spectacle that met my sight. The greater portion of the smoke had risen, and hung suspended like a dais about twenty feet above the redoubt. Across the bluish vapour one saw, behind their trenches, which were half destroyed, the Russian grenadiers, presenting arms and motionless as statues. I fancy that I can still see each soldier, the left eye fixed upon us, the right hidden by his raised musket. In the embrasure, at some feet from us, stood a man, fusee in hand, close to the cannon. . . . I trembled : I firmly believed that my last hour had come. 'This is a nice dance,' cried my captain, 'just going to begin ! *Bon soir !*' These were the last words I ever heard him utter." But it is in the story of *Tamango*, perhaps, that Mérimée's sustained energy in narration is best displayed. Captain Leroux—so the story runs—is "*un bon marin*," who has been wounded at Trafalgar. He receives his discharge "with excellent certificates," and becomes a slave-trader. One

day, by a treasonable action, he manages to get Tamango, an African slave-dealer, on board among his cargo of blacks. Tamango leads the negroes to revolt ; and the captain and the whole of his crew are massacred. The slaves now discover how helpless they are. No one, not even Tamango, has the slightest knowledge of navigation. They are in a storm, and every moment they expect that the vessel will sink. Some take to the boats and perish, while others remain on board the doomed ship and die of hunger. In this dramatic story, when Leroux makes a prisoner of the poor slave-dealer, and sends him in chains to join the slaves whom he has sold to him an hour ago, he exclaims, " How they will laugh ! They will see that there is a Providence watching over them after all." This cynicism, which so frequently occurs in Mérimée's work, mars some of his best efforts. In speaking of *Tamango*, Jules Lemaître says, " It is neither possible to heap together more horrors, nor to tell them with greater *froideur* and precision than Mérimée has done . . . . There is more pessimism in it," he adds, " than in the whole of the ROUGON-MACQUART.

Mérimée's novel of the Spanish gipsy, *Carmen*, treats of love and death in almost as metaphysical a fashion as Schopenhauer. The girl is *sans foi ni loi*: she shrinks from no crime ; and one is surprised at one's sympathy for such a woman. But in truth this savage and ungovernable nature seizes hold of the reader when his interest in her is once roused : one follows her with strained eyes from the time she makes her escape from the soldiers, in almost the first scene in the story, until she stands calmly waiting for the blow from her lover's poignard. She dies with so much nobility of character and resignation, that one cannot resist feeling that this cruel and inconstant gitana has a good heart, capable of generous actions, but that she has been led by evil surroundings to regard her own wayward life as the only possible one for her. "*Carmen sera toujours libre*," are almost her last words—" *Calli elle est née, calli elle mourra*." If this character is a true study from nature—and there is no reason to doubt it — Mérimée has clearly demonstrated that George Borrow bestowed too much praise on the virtue of the Spanish gipsy. At the same time, it is only fair to add that the author of *Carmen* fully acknowledges that the gitanas manifest extraordinary devotion to their husbands. There is no danger, no

privation, that they will not brave to help them in their need. In fact, their chief virtue, in Mérimée's opinion, is *patriotism*—if one may so term the fidelity shown in their relations with those of the same origin as themselves—their eagerness to help each other, the inviolable secrecy they maintain in transactions that are in any way compromising. “But it may be said,” he adds, that similar honesty is observed in all mysterious associations, and in dealing without the pale of the law.” The best scenes in this book read like extracts from *Don Quixote*—a work which no Frenchman knew better than Mérimée. His introduction to *Don Quichotte de Cervantes*, translated by Lucien Biart, is well known.\*

Since its appearance in 1840, the popularity of *Colomba* has never diminished. In this novel Mérimée has admirably maintained his simplicity of style. Every detail has an indescribable ring of truth; no one can doubt that the heroine is a Corsican woman of the surest type. The manners and habits of the country, and even modes of thinking, are depicted to the life; indeed, Mérimée, in his visits to Corsica, mixed with the people—just as he had done in Spain before writing *Carmen*—and conversed with them in their own *patois*. Nor can Mérimée have been less at home in Russian life to have written the “Faux Demetrius”; and in this work he makes notable use of popular legends and traditions. The true Demetrius was murdered in 1591, in his tenth or eleventh year, at the instigation of Boris, the Regent, who afterwards usurped the imperial throne. This claimant, the “False Demetrius,” started up about 1603. He was a man of twenty-two, who told a plausible story of his escape from the assassins. He produced a golden cross ornamented with precious stones which he pretended to have received from his grandfather, Prince Ivan Mslislovski, on the day of his baptism. “I do not know whether he had read Machiavelli's *Prince*,” remarks Mérimée, “but it might be said that he attempted literally to follow the precepts of that great politician.” He reigned eleven months, when his career was cut short, precisely as that of the true Demetrius had been, by assassination. Mérimée's drama the *Débuts d'un aventurier* is founded on this episode in Russian history. It is not a play that could have ever been intended for

\* “La Vie et l'œuvre de Cervantes.” *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1877.

the stage, any more than his comedy the *Deux Héritages*. They are studies of character, like his *Nouvelles*, rather than dramatic compositions.

When the *Chronique du temps de Charles IX.* was published, Walter Scott's novels were the talk of London and Paris; and if Mérimée had no intention of competing with the author of "Ivanhoe," there is little doubt that there was unconscious influence at work at the time the novel was written. The *Chronique*, however, can scarcely be called an historical romance, for Charles IX. only appears in one chapter, and most of the characters are pure inventions. The reader's attention is concentrated upon the loves of Mergy and Diane de Turgis; and in order to reproduce the language and even the passions of the sixteenth century, Mérimée read a great many memoirs of that period which assisted materially in making the work so eminently successful. *Diane* is truly a woman of the sixteenth century—passionate, voluptuous—a woman whose whole life is occupied in seeking pleasure: and so ardent is her love—so full of life—that she excites admiration as well as sympathy. The scene in which she hides her lover, during the massacre of St. Bartholomew, is powerfully described. In this story Mérimée has given a striking example of the influence of religion, where *Diane de Turgis*, whose one thought is to merit pardon for the sins she has committed—and those she intends to commit—by obtaining the conversion of Mergy, who is a Protestant.

In the tale of *Arsène Guillot*, the heroine utters the sentiment if not the very words of Becky Sharp. "*Quand on est riche, il est aise d'*être honnte*; moi j'aurais *été honnte*, si j'en avais en le moyen.*" This story contains in a nutshell many volumes on popular religion, and on the true feelings of courtesans. The *Double Méprise* and the *Vase Étrusque* are severe sermons against the errors of credulity or of imagination: and if one would learn what a single departure from honour may cost, one has only to read the *Partie de trictrac*. But the true charm in Mérimée's stories consists in the style, the idiomatic language, the touches of humour, fancy and irony that are interspersed. Justice can never be done to them in translation. From his historical works he has never gained much popularity; for instead of studying artistic effects he avoided them. There is a remarkable absence of flowing narrative:

there is no seasoning of romance, no exaggeration of facts or undue colouring of character. "By dint of insisting on certainty," says Taine, "he dried up knowledge—kept only the wood without the flower. There is no other way of accounting for the coldness of his historical essays, 'Don Pedro,' 'The Cossacks,' 'The False Demetrius,' 'The Servile War,' 'The Cataline Conspiracy'—complete solid studies, well supported by authorities, well developed; but the personages of which are lifeless, probably because he did not choose to make them live. . . He might easily have done so, but it was contrary to his system to set them visibly before us." He put an interdict on his imagination.

The turning point in Mérimée's life was the marriage of the Countess de Téba. He was an old and attached friend of her mother, Madame de Montijo, through whom he had been named senator. At the Tuileries, Biarritz, and at Fontainebleau, he became an habitual guest of the Imperial family, and there is every reason to believe that he gave the Emperor valuable assistance in the composition of his "*Vic de César*." One day, while asking Mérimée to collect certain materials for this work, the Emperor suggested that he should receive some indemnity for his trouble. "*Sire*," was Mérimée's answer. "*J'ai les livres nécessaires, et je calcule qu'avec trois mains de papier, vingt-cinq plumes d'oie et une bouteille d'encre de la petite vertu, je pourvoirai aux autres frais. Je pris votre Majesté de me permettre de lui faire ce cadeau.*" It was not unnatural that Mérimée, enjoying as he did a recognized place as wit in society, should be sensible of the pleasure of exercising a sort of *royauté intellectuelle* at court, where there were few men of literary calibre. Indeed, more than one of his stories arose out of discussions in the Imperial circle, and was read over to them by way of testing its probable success with the public. While at Biarritz, in 1866, the conversation turned one day upon the difficult situations in which one is sometimes placed. That same night, having drunk some strong tea, Mérimée wrote on a situation of this kind. He read it to the Empress. At that time there happened to be at Biarritz the Grand Duchess Marie, the daughter of Nicholas, to whom Mérimée had been presented some years before, and the acquaintance had been renewed. Shortly after the reading, a messenger came from the Grand

Duchess begging him to wait upon her that evening with his romance. His answer was very characteristic. "I have the honour to be the jester of Her Majesty and I cannot work abroad without her leave." The least result expected by Mérimée was, that there would be a war with Russia; and he was "not a little mortified" not only at receiving the Empress Eugenie's permission, but a renewed entreaty from the Duchess to wait upon her. "She played the good princess," says Mérimée, "and gave me excellent tea and cigarettes, for she smokes, like almost all the Russian ladies." The romance in question was the *Chambre Bleue*, afterwards published in one of the journals and included in his "Dernières Nouvelles." It is a story of a young couple, just arrived in Paris, who occupy the best apartment in an hotel, called "La Chambre Bleue." In the next room, separated only by a wooden partition with folding doors, is an Englishman, their fellow-traveller on the railway, who had been exhibiting a roll of bank-notes, and, had quarelled in their hearing with an ill-looking nephew, after threatening to cut him off with a shilling. The Englishman calls for a bottle of port. The landlord, not having any port in the house, concocts the wine out of a bottle of ratafia and a carafe of brandy. This composition proves so successful that the last articulate sound heard in the hotel before the couple retire to rest is: "Waiter, bring me another bottle of the same port." . . . The night-light burning on the chimney-piece in the blue chamber is more than half consumed, when, in the apartment of the Englishman, hitherto silent, a strange sound is heard, such as a heavy body might produce in falling, and then there is a stifled cry and some muttered words resembling an imprecation. The young couple in the blue chamber start and awake. This noise fills them both with dread . . . a minute passes and a door is cautiously opened in the corridor and cautiously closed. The young man begins to think of the uncle with the bank-notes, and the nephew coveting them, of that stifled cry and of the muffled steps in the corridor. "That nephew had the look of an assassin," says he: while he is still speaking, with his eyes fixed upon the door of communication between the blue room and the Englishman's, something like a dark shining line appears moving in the direction of a little satin slipper thrown carelessly near this door . . . No more room for doubt!

It is a liquid, and this liquid—now distinctly visible—is blood. . . . What was to be done under these circumstances? His obvious duty is to rush to the aid of the Englishman, who might be still living, or at all events to ring the bell and call up the people of the hotel. . . . But what would happen if he gave the alarm? The gendarmes, the procureur imperial and his clerk, would arrive forthwith. Before asking what he had seen or heard, these officials would begin by saying: "What is your name? Your papers? And the lady? . . . You will have to appear at the assizes to say that on such a day of the month, or such an hour of the night, you were witnesses of such a fact, etc., etc." What appears to the young man the most prudent course, if the most selfish, under the circumstances, is to lie still till daybreak, and then leave Paris by the first train before the discovery of the catastrophe. . . . The couple are hurrying away without their breakfast, when the chambermaid is heard calling to the waiter: "Make haste with the hot water for milord's tea. And bring a sponge, he has broken the bottle and his whole room is flooded with his port."

Prosper Mérimée's method of narration often reveals this want of earnestness—sometimes even a want of true artistic conception—that has led some critics to deny him the gift of *émotion littéraire*. An anecdote, told about his story of the Chambre Blue, is an illustration of this defect—if taken *au sérieux*. "I have made a great mistake," said he, when complimented about the *Chambre Bleue* by Emile Augier. "I had intended at first to introduce a tragic *dénouement* to my tale; and *naturally* I had told the story in a pleasant vein. I changed the idea: I have given it a happy ending. I really ought to tell it all over again in an earnest tone; but that is too much trouble, so I shall let it stand as it is." The aim of most authors, of course, is to make the reader feel all the emotion that they themselves experience: and in proportion to the writer's sincerity so will he succeed. But Mérimée would seem to have taken a contrary view—at least he led one to suppose that he did—in his life as well as in his works; for he affected not to feel. At the moment when the keenest emotion is awakened, a phrase—perhaps merely a word—warns you not to distress yourself too deeply. It is as though the genius or talent of the author, were fighting for the ascendancy—a fight for which the reader

has to suffer. The style may be piquant, but such treatment can never be considered high art. "If you would bring tears to the eyes of others," says Horace, "you must first bring tears to your own." Between author and reader, sympathy is a necessary condition, not only in poetry and oratory, but in the novel. There is one scene, however—the death-scene in Arsène Guillot—which has mystified the critics in their attempt to decide whether Prosper Mérimée shall take a place among the great masters. After reading that scene no fair critic can absolutely deny to him the gift of *émotion littéraire*: it can only be argued that his inordinate cynicism has brought upon him too harsh a judgment.

"Ever since daybreak the priest had remained near Arsène, observing with what rapidity the patient was sinking, and wishing to make the most of the few moments that still remained. He waved Max and Madame de Piennes aside, broken down with grief, and then spoke a few solemn and consoling words to the young girl—words which religion has reserved for such moments as these. When he had ceased, doubtful if not in the presence of the dead, Madame de Piennes rose softly; and they all remained motionless, anxiously regarding the livid face of Arsène. Her eyes were closed. Each held his breath, dreading to disturb the awful repose that had perhaps already begun: and each distinctly heard the feeble ticking of a watch lying upon the little table at her side. 'She is gone, poor thing,' said the nurse after she had held her *tabatière* to Arsène's lips. 'You see, the glass has caught no moisture.' 'She is dead, poor child,' cried Max, waking out of a stupor into which he appeared to have fallen. 'What happiness has she had in this world?' Suddenly Arsène opened her eyes. 'I have loved,' she murmured in a scarcely audible voice: and her fingers stirred and seemed to express a desire to hold his hand. Max and Madame de Piennes came nearer, and each took one of her hands. 'I have loved,' she said once more with a troubled sigh. These were her last words. For a long time Max and Madame de Piennes held her cold hands in theirs without finding courage to raise their eyes."

This novel, as Mérimée himself relates, excited the indignation of all the so-called virtuous people, and particularly the women of fashion "who danced the polka and listened to the

sermons of the père Ravignan." They even went so far as to say that the author acted like the monkeys who climbed to the top of the trees and having reached the topmost branch make grimaces at the world. It was at this very time that Mérimée was a candidate for the Academy. He was deeply interested in the result, though he tried to pass it off with an air of unconcern, so characteristic of the man. It is the inexorable rule for the candidate to call on each academician for the personal solicitation of his vote. Mérimée, however, had no reason to complain of his reception. He found people very polite, quite accustomed to their parts and acting them very seriously. "Does it not strike you as ridiculous to say to a man," remarks Mérimée, "'Monsieur, I believe myself one of the forty cleverest men of France; I am as good as you,' and other drolleries? It is necessary to translate this into polite and varied language, according to the persons."

No one has been at greater pains than Mérimée to hide from the indiscreet and prying world the mysteries of his life. He never published his "sorrows" in verse or prose; he never even betrayed himself in his conversation. "To hear him talk," says Taine, "one would have supposed that anyone could have written his books." He wrote the *Débuts d'un Aventurier* in fifteen days, so he declared, because he had "nothing better to occupy his time." In order to write "La Guzla," as Mérimée once remarked, you need a very simple receipt, "*se procurer une statistique de l'Illyrie, le voyage de l'abbé Fortis, apprendre cinq ou six mot de slave.*" Indeed no author ever took more delight in mystifying his reader. It was alleged that "La Guzla" was a translation of songs and popular poetry of an Illyrian bard, named Hyacinth Maglanowich, whose biography is given by the translator, an Italian refugee. The most learned linguists, French and German, were completely taken in: a controversy arose as to the existence and authenticity of the alleged originals: and the first to penetrate the mystery was Goethe, who said he was put upon the right track by observing that *Guzla* is the anagram of *Gazul*. On throwing off the disguise, Mérimée wrote: "What diminishes the merit of Goethe in divining the author of "La Guzla," is that I sent him a copy with signature and flourish, by a Russian who was passing through Weimer." Then again in the Théâtre de Clara Gazul, we find a collection of

dramatic pieces purporting to be translated from the Spanish of a Spanish actress, by a Frenchman named "Lestrange," who had been intimately acquainted with her best parts. Both actress and translator were imaginary. To complete the deception, M. Delescluze produced a portrait—which was afterwards lithographed—of Clara, "from the life": and in one sense it certainly was; being, in fact, a portrait of Mérimée, with the features a little softened, in the costume of a Spanish woman. The success was so complete that a Spaniard—probably ashamed to confess his ignorance of so celebrated a country-woman—on being asked his opinion of the translation, replied that, although very good, it hardly did justice to the original.

With all his reserve in his intercourse with men, Mérimée failed to put into practice his own maxim, "*Ne prenez jamais une femme pour confidente.*" No one interested in his life can fail to recall the *succès de curiosité* of his correspondence during thirty years with an incognita. Nor has it ever been more clearly demonstrated how eager the French are for this class of literature of which Mérimée's *Lettres à une Inconnue* is a striking example. They are unquestionably *piquant*; the friendship expressed in these letters could not have existed between two persons of the same sex. There is no love-making; it is an *amitié* enlivened with a hundred and one lights and shades of sentiment, such as do not appear in cases of ordinary intimacy. The mutual confidence, severe criticism and, not infrequently, reproach, has an inexpressible charm for the reader; for their *bardinerie* never comes to anything serious. "Are you suffering from any pain or disappointment of the heart? There are some phrases in your last note, mysterious like the rest, which seem to insinuate as much. . . . You will contract your black and beautiful eyebrows and you will say: 'The insolent fellow doubts whether I have a heart!' for it is the grand pretension now-a-days. Since so many passionate or so-called passionate romances and poems have been concocted, all women pretend to have hearts. Wait a little. When you have a heart in right earnest, you will give me news of it. You will regret that good old time when you only lived by the head, and you will find that the evils you are now suffering are but pricks of the pin in comparison with the stabs of the dagger which will rain upon you when the time of the passions has arrived." While reading the letters one

feels that at any moment one or the other may be indiscreet enough to step beyond the limits they have marked out; that friendship would change into love, and all the piquancy of the situation would disappear. How the acquaintance began we are not told, but we gather that these friends very seldom meet. "We have not seen each other more than six or seven times in six years; and besides, during half the three or four hours we passed together not a word has been spoken." In one of his early letters Mérimée proposed remaining in Paris, "in the hope of your return." Then he adds, "I should be charmed to see you. Perhaps you would make the acquaintance of a true friend." Mérimée also corresponded with an English lady. But his letters to her, although interesting in many ways, have not the *caractère d'intimité* of those he addressed to his *Inconnue*. In his last letter, written only a few days before his death, in September, 1870, he says: "All my life I have tried to fight against prejudice, to be a citizen of the world before being a Frenchman; but all my philosophy has been of no avail. To-day I bleed for the wounds of these foolish Frenchmen, I weep for their humiliation; and, absurd and ungrateful as they seem to me, I love them always."

As one found Mérimée in society, so one has found him in his books. *Le style c'est l'homme*. He studied and wrote all his life *en amateur*, passing from one subject to another as occasion or fancy urged him. And yet no one can doubt that the *Chronique de Charles IX.*, *Colomba* and *Carmen*, and such tales as *Mateo Falcone*, the *Enlèvement de la Redoute*, *Tamango*, and even the *Vase Étrusque* will live. More than fifty years have gone by since most of them first appeared, and they are as popular as ever. Besides, they are short, which gives them a still better chance. The longest, *Colomba*, is scarcely half an ordinary novel volume—some of them only eight or ten pages. And the situations contained in these tales, the passion depicted in the various characters will prove as true to nature in a hundred years as they do to-day. Mérimée's types are masterly and original; a Corsican vendetta, the last voyage of a slave-trader, the execution of a son by his father. Nearly all are the stories of assassins, like the tales of Bandello and the Italian novelists, told with the most perfect *sang froid*, strong delineation of character, and extraordinary power of detail. They do not always point a

moral; but they are eminently suggestive, and afford ample opportunity for reflection. The rest of his works will probably be forgotten; even now his *Théâtre de Clara Gazul* is little more than a name.

THOMAS ST. E. HAKE.



## One, and Another.

By the Author of "Dr. Edith Romney," "Her Own Counsel," etc.

"One man may steal a horse, while another may not look over the wall."

I HAVE always considered this the truest of proverbs, perhaps because I have so often in my own person exemplified its truth—compulsorily, for "I'm sure it was no wish of mine iver," as Mrs. Tulliver said of her lying awake at nights thinking of her scattered china and linen. It may be an edifying, but it is rarely an agreeable thing to be singled out by fate to point some proverb's wretched wisdom. It is especially far from agreeable if, in the case of the one quoted above, you serve for a striking illustration of the truth of the second half; and still less pleasant is it if, after the manner of the stern editorial dictum, to this rule there is no exception. I never knew any person, however loyal to the wisdom of proverbs, that relished testifying practically to the truth of this adage if thrust into the onerous position of Another, no matter how great the spiritual sustenance to be derived from the parallel between "One" and the bay-tree. In these days of pictorial advertisements there is a tacit and general sentiment that resemblance to the flourishing bay-tree confers great temporal compensations.

My elder brother Jack from childhood up to manhood played One to my Another. We never by any chance exchanged parts; still I can truthfully affirm that this monotony of rôle was through no lack of desire for variety on my side. It is useless to struggle against a proverb: even when we were children the tyranny of this one lay upon us, or rather upon me. Jack's fertile brain conceived mischief; I obeyed orders and supported him as humble ally. He got all the fun, only the other part accordingly remained for me. At school it was always the same: he invariably went off with the horse; I, as invariably, was chased from the wall. The like monotony

pursued us into our professions. Jack was to be a barrister. Now, as every one knows, a barrister is not supposed to have briefs until he is at home among the fifties. This, therefore, was exactly the holiday profession in which Jack was sure to shine. If idleness or extravagance was hinted at in reference to our man of law, our relatives only laughed and said, "Who expects anything else of Jack?" And Jack, I am bound to confess, faithfully fulfilled every expectation entertained of him. I was put into the medical profession, which, like all things terrestrial, possesses more than one side, most of its many sides being obviously unpleasant. And I was required to work hard, to practise economy, and to push my way unaided.

For nearly twelve months I had been in practice at the bracing watering-place of L—, when Jack, without the form of an invitation on the one hand or of warning on the other, presented himself as my guest. Now I had borne our separation—fond as I truly was of the handsome, dashing fellow—with really laudable resignation, sustained, moreover, by a hope that it would break the spell of our relative parts, and I rather distrusted this sudden burst of fraternal devotion. The not inexperienced Another glanced at the love-quickenin power of money, which, if indeed the inspiring motive, would be avowed frankly and promptly enough, I knew, for neither reticence nor lack of boldness could be entered among Jack's failings. Many have been my conjectures whether the very excess of his audacity did not account for the way he led fate and folks captive. Every one that came in contact with him succumbed to some magic he possessed. His speeches of frank insolence—and they were many—were only laughed at; those in authority over him received sublimely contemptuous disregard of their wishes and—almost applauded. He could be winning as well as insolent and audacious, and when winning, he, to speak with Oriental hyperbole, slew his thousands. I, the chief sufferer from Jack's charm, was as much under it as anyone. He was a tall, strikingly handsome fellow, with vanity and to spare for every inch, and showing consciousness of personal attractions in every lounging movement and in every glance of his cool, free grey eye. When he descended upon me, upsetting my bachelor quiet, throwing my mild landlady into consternation by his demands, and asked carelessly, "Well, old chap, how are

you getting on?" I was gratified in spite of doubts, and fluttered about to wait on him almost as busily as Mrs. Rand. *My* requests to the good woman had been modest, even diffident, and mild as Mrs. Rand to all appearance was, she had ignored the majority, and assented to a few unmistakably under protest, so that by this time she might have exhibited me at any Show of Model Lodgers, sure of my winning the first prize for docility and general unobtrusiveness.

Never did I venture to ring my bell except at stated times as a signal—not for a summons, oh no!—merely as the signal of my presence. Jack rang half-a-dozen peals before his first meal, flung his boots into the passage to be cleaned "at once" (five in the afternoon!), and shouted down the stairs for hot water; that brought, for a different kind of soap; that procured, for another towel; and expressed his thanks in sarcastic inquiries as to the date of the duster's last appearance in that bedroom, and whether the uses of a looking glass were clearly understood by the household. Trembling and alarmed, I looked on and listened; but my landlady and her maid flew cheerfully to attend to Jack, and I even felt a reflection of glory from my relationship to so troublesome a guest in Mrs. Rand's increased respectfulness.

It was lovely summer weather and, our evening meal over, we sallied forth to survey my "slaughtering arena," as Jack termed L—— and I was flattered again by a question he deigned to put concerning my prospects. Perhaps, distrusting the purity of his brotherly zeal, I painted them in more subdued tints than were actually needful.

"Ah," said he, "you're not the fellow to push your way, and L—— don't seem much of a place. You must marry a fortune, Bob—that's the only course I can see for either of us poor devils. Ha! thou blenchest! Some one in the wind?"

"Nonsense, Jack!" I cried, annoyed, trying to avert my gaze from a certain large grey house standing alone near the cliff and quite away from the town.

Jack's bold grey eye at once darted thither. "The only house that looks promising in the place!" quoth he. "Who lives there? Come, Bob, unbosom thyself to a tender brother who always sought thy interest before his own. She lives in

yon solitary mansion? She is rich and scornful? Thy hangdog looks betray thee!"

"Not scornful!" I hurriedly answered. "At least—that is—no, I feel sure—if I could only—"

"Eloquent and—lucid," interpolated Jack; and, though I had determined to say nothing to him on this subject, in three minutes he had dragged all from me.

An old lady lived in that large grey house, and with her a young and, I felt sure, beautiful granddaughter, who was guarded jealously from all approaches of men by her formidable relative. The girl was an heiress, and Mrs. Neville, grim old duenna, had conceived a deep and most unfair distrust of male sincerity. She would admit no unmarried man within her doors. The garden was enclosed by a high brick wall, so that no one could see the beauty within, and when she walked out her features were effectually hidden by a dark blue veil. Even I, the doctor, had only been admitted to the house to attend a sick maid.

"She may have skin disease," said Jack, who had listened with interest.

"Her skin is as fair as a lily!" I said indignantly.

"Ah, *I* like dark beauties—I'm fair," with a supremely satisfied air, and a little swagger for the benefit of a trio of small boys. Jack would have paraded before a travelling monkey if worthier spectators were wanting. "Then you have seen her?"

"Just a glimpse," I curtly answered. The occasion had been too mortifying to be recalled with pleasure.

"Now," declared Jack, "this is all nonsense on the old lady's part. She invites circumvention, and, Bob, we'll circumvent her! This is just a nice holiday task for me. I haven't much work on hand just now, and I'll devote myself to your interests while I recruit on the balmy shores of L——: I'll storm the fortress and give you access—isn't that the proper word?—to this concealed beauty. Leave it to me," with a grand gesture.

I privately shook my head at the idea of even Jack's being able to overcome the obstacles in the way; yet I was excited at the same time by the thought of such powerful partisanship, for I had a confidence in his luck which amounted to superstition. He was already reconnoitring the wall, and I was anxious to draw him away, fearing lest an awkward turn at the corner with

two steps down to a side-door might suggest a plan that had already brought *me* humiliation. Jack did glance at the place, but appeared to see in it no possibilities.

Next morning, as I was returning from a patient who lived outside the town, I was hailed by Mrs. Neville's gardener. "A gentleman as says he's your brother, sir, has met with an accident down them steps, which he also says has sprained his foot bad, and missis wants you to step in."

The man was unfeeling enough to grin; as, assuming every appearance of fraternal solicitude, I hastened to the house, inwardly cursing Jack's want of invention and painfully agitated at the prospect of facing the old lady. Ah, yes, she was in the room! keeping grim and rigid watch over my prostrate brother, who was acting his part with consummate skill, even contriving to call up a very respectable pallor, to which my fiery visage must have presented every essential for contrast.

"How d'ye do, Dr. Dalton?" said the old lady, with a disagreeable twinkle in her deep eyes. "Singular thing, isn't it, how those steps trip up strong men? No woman has come to grief down them."

"It's a confoundedly—ugh! beg pardon, ma'am—it's a beastly awkward corner! You'll be prosecuted for a dangerous nuisance or something if you don't protect it," cried Jack angrily, grimacing and squirming quite admirably. "Pray retire, madam, and let my brother see to my injuries."

"Oh!—if you think the form of an examination *necessary*," said the pleasant old lady in a tone meant for me alone. "Ring for anything you *should* want, doctor." And she sailed away.

"Good heavens, Jack!" I burst out under my breath as soon as the door was shut. "Why in the name of all that's unlucky couldn't you exercise some originality in your plan?"

"Originality——! What the deuce do you mean?"

"This—this is precisely what *I* did—only two weeks ago."

Jack's eyes met mine. He was going off into a shout of laughter, but in time remembered to turn it into a groan. He was an excellent actor, always. Looking at his suffering countenance and hearing his dismal utterances, I felt with renewed pangs of mortification how inferior my own performance had been.

"Could anything be more unlucky? We shall be the laughing stock of the place! That old hag——"

"Will you cut off my boot and see to my foot?" yelled Jack.

Mechanically I obeyed, and my Jeremiads were drowned by his groans. "Oh, I say, don't overdo it!" I whispered, as, from sheer professional instinct, I examined him. "We can't keep up the farce, you know——" I broke off to stare at my patient in a rapture of admiration. Jack's luck *never* failed him! He *had* sprained his ankle, and badly too.

"That's the difference between success and failure, you see," he murmured, after I had bound up his foot. "Always be sure of your line, and don't attempt one where you're bound to make an ass of yourself, as *you* did, old boy, though you are a doctor and might have managed the trick. Now I'm tied here by the leg for some time, and it'll go hard if I can't contrive to circumvent that old disbelieving witch for you. And, Bob, I've seen *her*—she was near and heard my yells for succour. Are you deep in love, eh?"

"I—yes, oh yes!—if I knew her——"

"Just so. Then you'll not funk it? All's fair in love and war, eh?"

I cordially agreed. "Success makes everything fair."

"Jove, but you're right! Forget your unlucky spill and go and brazen it out with the old lady. Be sure you lay it on about the disastrous effects of moving, etc?"

With a sinking heart I set about my task; it was fully as disagreeable as I feared. Mrs. Neville heard me out with incredulity, I can hardly call it even polite, written legibly upon every feature. "Exactly," she observed when I had ended. "As the case is so serious you will of course not object to my calling in a second opinion? I have the greatest confidence in your medical skill, Dr. Dalton, except in the one matter of sprained ankles."

I went away in a towering rage, but soon thoughts of the powerful ally I had left right in the midst of the enemy's camp soothed me to softer emotions, though I must confess I dwelt more on the gratification of outwitting Mrs. Neville than on the tender aspect. Nothing did I hear from Jack till the evening of the next day, and then I received a tiny note in an unknown hand, brought by a messenger. It was signed "Alice of the

Blue Veil," and somewhat puzzled, I read : " Dear Doctor,—This is written for 'Jack,' and just exactly as he says it has to be. What on earth do you mean by not coming to enquire after a suffering brother? I have sent old What's-his-name to the right-about, though for the sake of your reputation I let him examine my unlucky foot, and have given it the old lady pretty hot for her impudence. Come to-morrow morning at twelve. Yours truly, old boy." And then followed that signature. So her name was Alice. Just like Jack to get the fair young girl to write so shockingly of her grandmother! He would beguile a virago herself by his insolent blarney!

But how grateful I was to him when I went next day ! For there, seated near his couch, was—Alice ! her bright hair shrouded by no hideous veil. She turned her face full ; well, it was less pretty, less immediately enchanting than I had expected, but for an heiress, wonderful enough. I was prepared for love at first sight, but the immediate effects of the passion were, candour bids me confess, less overwhelming than my study of fiction had led me to anticipate. She smiled and blushed and let me shake her hand, and I felt myself redden too, sure that Jack had told her of my—my affection—at least, what would be affection had it opportunity to blossom. He did not allow it much growing-time then, for at once he said to Alice :

" Now ta-ta, run away, or granny will be vexed." Just like Jack ! And the girl only laughed and obeyed, not one whit offended !

" Well ? " demanded Jack. " Where are your thanks ? That's an earnest of more to come. Confess I am doing better for you than you dared expect ? "

I was grateful enough, and still more so as the days went on, for though I cannot say I enjoyed as much intercourse with Alice as I could have desired, I was constantly receiving hopeful intelligence from my brother. He said we must baffle Mrs. Neville's suspicions, and so he durst not let me see too much of Alice. Once let the old lady fear the young doctor, and his visits would be stopped. Of him, Jack, she had no dread ; he did his suffering in her presence, and was always bemoaning his fate in being tied by the leg in that dull hole (this frankness was Jack all over), and letting fall hints as to tender reasons which lent special hardship to the trial, and he ignored Alice and

pointedly expressed his preference for dark beauties. I chuckled at having this consummate actor and tremendous ally at work on my behalf. Again and again I heard how well things were going. Alice admired my name. A week later, she had allowed Jack to force from her a blushing confession that she would desire no greater bliss than to be a near, a *very* near relative of mine, which as he remarked was as good as an acceptance.

A day or two later when I paid my call, he announced that all was in readiness; he had arranged everything for me with Alice, and it only remained for me to play my part. This must be my last call; his foot was getting well rapidly, and Mrs. Neville expressed impatience at my visits. "She's awfully afraid of you!" laughed Jack. I laughed too. She had made her uneasiness sufficiently clear only a day or two before in a harangue against early and imprudent marriages. Once she had, indeed, in the warmth of her eloquence used the word mercenary, but to do the old lady justice, I believe it was an unintentional slip. She had sternly declared that guardians were not enough consulted in England, and had most pointedly and resolutely assured me that did her Alice marry any one she, her grandmother, could not approve of, she would be cut off without even the shilling. In my heart of hearts I scoffed at this menace. Alice was her only relative; her anger would blow over when once the girl was married.

We laid our plans, at least, Jack told me what I had to do. His directions were clear and simple. In a few days he must leave the house; my not calling during those days would lull the old lady's suspicions on my account, so that all would be easily managed. I must bring a cab for him, one with two horses, help him into it, and order the man to drive to a certain place in the lane which I must choose and describe to him, where Alice would be ready waiting. She was to slip out of the house a full hour before his departure, ostensibly to spend the morning on the cliffs. At the point agreed upon we could pick her up and drive, not to L—— Station for fear of recognition, but to M—— the next on the line, five miles off by road.

"And you?" I asked. "I suppose you'll travel with us to London? You won't care to stay here?"

"Hardly," he said ruefully. "I should be torn to pieces by the old lady for helping you to rob her. Yes, I must return to

town, and I shall want a little of the ready—that was what I came to L—for—I'm deuced hard up. Lend me ten, will you?"

"I can make it fifteen if you like, old fellow," I said in the exuberance of my gratitude. "A man isn't helped to a fortune every day."

"No, worse luck," echoed Jack—I thought a little wistfully, and I decided to try to spare him twenty. He deserved a handsome commission. "I say," he added, "you're not troubled by scruples—that sort of thing—eh, about the old woman?"

"Not I! All's fair in love and war!"

"That's all right, then," said he cordially. "I only wondered if you'd spunk enough for the adventure."

This doubt helped to nerve me; I determined to show Jack that my courage was equal to the occasion for once. He should not find the scheme he had been at such pains to concoct for my benefit fail just at the last moment. Those four days were days of great excitement to me. It was my first adventure since I was a lad, and the issues were of such vital importance as to cause me great anxiety. I regretted only my comparative want of acquaintance with the young lady I was about to carry off and marry so suddenly. I even felt a little shy of her, though quite convinced she would prove perfectly charming. Little leisure was left, however, for sentimental doubts and tremors. I had plenty to do: I had to make arrangements for Alice's reception in London under the roof of an old landlady of Jack's, and to engage a *locum tenens* for my fortnight's absence. He was a college friend, and we settled that he should arrive at L—the day I left, and explain to my patients that I had been suddenly obliged to visit my home on account of family trouble, for it was impolitic to breathe a word of my impending holiday lest it should reach Mrs. Neville's ear and put her on the alert.

The fateful morning dawned, and fortunately it was fine, so there would be no difficulty about Alice's going out for her morning's ramble. Punctually at twelve, and with much inward agitation, even trepidation, I called for my brother. Mrs. Neville in her joy at the event came out to the very steps to speed her parting guest.

"Always glad to see the back of a doctor," she observed with

her customary pleasantness. "And I congratulate you, Dr. Dalton, on having furbished up your medical knowledge on that one little point, you know—*sprains*. These steps are all right, eh, Mr. Dalton? Such a pity if you had another accident just when you are escaping from this dull hole!"

"You may well say that!" was Jack's fervent rejoinder, as with the help of my arm he made the descent. "Jove! I've never known a duller! Even Miss Alice—by the bye, where is she? Can't I say good-bye?"

"Out!" said Mrs. Neville triumphantly.

"Oh, out?" echoed Jack, and he returned her benevolent smile by one as benevolent. "Well, for manners commend me to the natives of L——! Tell her with my compliments, will you, that she might have had the civility to speed my departure as warmly as her grandmother."

"I will! Oh, I'll tell her!" cried Mrs. Neville, and she laughed and rubbed her hands in an exulting way that sent cold shudders coursing headlong down my spine.

"Jack!" I said as soon as we had started, "has she discovered the plot and locked up Alice? She looks so jubilant."

"By Jupiter!" cried Jack, and he positively turned pale. "If she has, I'll return and make *her* ankles acquainted with those steps. No, no, Bob—she can't have found out—we've been too deep."

Still he looked uneasy, and I felt as comfortable as a detected thief. We said not another word; but long before we could see the corner where Alice was to await us our heads were out one on either side of the cab. She was not there—another moment—yes! yes! there was the little figure, the fluttering blue veil! Jack threw himself back with a smothered exclamation, and my professional eye took note that his late confinement had weakened him more than I thought. He looked quite shaken.

"Tell him to drive like seven furies," he cried, when he had pulled Alice in. He, as invalid, sat beside her. She cowered back in her corner trembling and frightened, while I felt utterly at a loss in such unusual circumstances. Ought I to take her hand?—to whisper a tender word of encouragement?—or—or what? Really, books of etiquette are wanted for these romantic junctures. Jack seemed to divine my embarrassment, for he leaned towards me and whispered, "Leavc her a bit, she'll come

round presently," and then fell into business talk. I told him exactly how all the arrangements were made; he nodded approval, murmured a careless, "And the ready?" and I passed him an envelope and took the opportunity of pressing his hand in token of my gratitude. I performed the two actions as surreptitiously as possible: my pains were wasted. He opened the envelope straightway, counted the notes audibly, nodded gracious approbation, and buttoned them up.

"We are nearly at the station," I said with a nervous cough, after a while. "Of course, old fellow, we can travel together?"

"That's for you to settle," replied Jack. "Oh, Bob, just a word before we get out. The fact is—a mere matter of detail, but may as well be mentioned now—Alice thinks she would rather go with me than with you. You see, she knows me better and in point of fact likes me better. Isn't it so, Alice?"

She sobbed, "Yes!" and clung to his arm.

"You see how it is with her," commented Jack calmly, and as I uttered a loud and indignant exclamation, he soothingly added, "Yes, yes, but we can't have a row in the cab or in the station either. That was the only condition on which I could induce her to run away, so I couldn't help myself. It's the lady's privilege to choose, and of course, as you remarked yourself, all's fair in love and war."

I left my *locum tenens* in possession for four full weeks. Not a day sooner had I courage to return to L——. On the morning after my arrival there came a note from Mrs. Neville bidding me call at once. My courage rose to the occasion after reading the few snappish words. Clearly she was in a rage, and meant to abuse Jack finely and express her stern determination to cut off her granddaughter, or, more likely, to announce the execution of her fell purpose. I remembered her warning and it wonderfully re-invigorated me, for now that the tender sentiment no longer obscured my perceptions, I read unmistakably an absolute sincerity in the threat. Jack would receive the just penalty for his treachery. I obeyed the summons, therefore, with alacrity. The sight of the steps did not cost me a pang: I entered the garden boldly.

"Hulloa, old boy, where have you hidden yourself for so long?" shouted Jack, big, audacious, radiant.

"Why, Dr. Dalton—no, I mean Bob—we thought *you* must have run away too," chimed in Alice, equalling his shamelessness. "*We* got home a week ago!"

"It's all right," whispered Jack in my ear as we walked towards the house. "Old lady's come down like a trump." He spoke in the most engagingly encouraging way, as if to set my brotherly anxiety at rest and sure I should be pleased, and, well—I own the weakness—I was pleased; at the first sound of his voice I was in full sympathy with him once more.

But I could not yet agree that it was "all right," for I had a very bad half-hour with the old lady alone. *I* was the culprit; *I* had aided and abetted my helpless, lame brother in his flight; on my head were heaped reproaches and scathing sarcasms. No, it was as usual not "all right" for me. Once more I had to play the part of—Another.

## Niccolo Machiavelli, Secretary of Florence.

" 'Tis I alone can teach you to make warre.  
 I know what greatest Conquerors know and are.  
 I fill the Brests of greatest Potentates,  
 I give them laws to governe their Estates."

THESE lines were written by Niccolo Machiavelli as a foot note to the portrait of himself which formed the frontispiece of most of the earlier editions of his works, and express in a few words the essence of his doctrines and ideas. Born in Florence in the latter part of the fifteenth century, about the year 1469, of a poor but ancient and noble family, he at an early age devoted himself to the pursuit of literature. His first known production was the comedy called "Niccias," a satirical one on the model of Aristophanes, and was such a success at Florence that Pope Leo X. ordered it to be performed at Rome by the same actors and with the same "decorations," in order that he might himself judge of its merits. It is unfortunately not to be found in any of the editions of his works, the only known plays of his being "Mandragolia," and "Clitia." He soon, however, gave up writing plays and undertook the, at the time, far more difficult and dangerous work of political writings. These include the "History of Florence," "The Origin of the Guelph and Ghibiline Factions," "The Life of Castruccio Castracani," "The Murder of Vitelli by Duke Valentino," "The State of France," "The State of Germany," "The Discourses of Titus Livius," "The Art of War," and lastly the greatest of all his productions "The Prince." "A work upon which mankind are not yet agreed in their opinion of the author's purpose in writing this book." It was first published in 1515 and dedicated to Lorenzo de Medicis, nephew of Pope Leo X. (Pietro de Medicis) who then held the Papal See, and who was the first Pontiff to threaten with excommunication those who read a prohibited book; Leo allowed it to be published without opposition. So also did Hadrian VI. his successor, while Clement VII. who succeeded Hadrian not only allowed Machiavelli to dedicate his "History of Florence" to him, but granted a licence to Anthony Bladus to print *all* his works at Rome in

1531. This continued until the Pontificate of Clement VIII. when, acting under the advice of the Jesuit, Possevin, and a priest named Borzius, his writings were condemned and their sale prohibited.

This work, which has probably been read and in many cases the doctrines prescribed followed by politicians of every nation and age in the world since Machiavelli's time, consists of twenty-six chapters, and as it is from this work that all estimates of his character are formed, it will not be amiss to examine them with care.

The 18th chapter, "How far a Prince is obliged by his promise," gives a fair example of the tenor of the whole, so I quote it in *extenso*, as it appears in the English Edition of 1674:

"How honourable is it for a Prince to keep his word, and act with integrity than collusion I suppose everybody understands; nevertheless experience has shown in our times that those Princes who have not pinned themselves up to that punctuality and preciseness, have done great things, and by their cunning and subtlety not only circumvented and darted the brains of those with whom they had to deal, but have overcome and been too hard for those who have been so superstitiously exact. For further explanation you must understand there are two ways of contending, by law and by force. The first is proper to men; the second to beasts; but because many times the first is insufficient, recourse must be had to the second.

"It belongs therefore to a Prince to understand both, when to make use of the rational and when of the brutal way; and this is recommended to Princes by ancient writers, who tell them how Achilles and several other Princes were committed to the education of Chiron the Centaur who was to keep them under his discipline, choosing them a monster half man and half beast for no other reason but to show how necessary it is for a Prince to be acquainted with both, for the one without the other will be of little duration. Seeing therefore it is of much importance to a Prince to take upon him the nature and disposition of a beast, of all the whole stock, he ought to imitate the Lyon and the Fox; for the Lyon is in danger of toils and snares and the Fox of the Wolf: so that he must be a Fox to find out the snares, and a Lyon to fright away the wolves, but they who keep wholly to the Lyon have no wise notion of themselves.

"A Prince therefore that is wise and prudent, cannot, or ought not to keep his *parole*, when the keeping of it is to his prejudice, and the causes for which he promised removed. Were all men good this Doctrine was not to be taught, but because they are wicked and not likely to be punctual with you you are not obliged to any such strictness with them; nor was there ever any Prince that wanted lawful pretence to justify his breach of promise.

"I might instance in many modern examples, and show how many Confederations, and Peaces, and Promises, have been broken by the infidelity of Princes, and how that he that best personated the Fox had the better success. Nevertheless it is of great consequence to disguise your inclination and to play the Hypocrite well; and men are so simple in their temper, and so submissive to their present necessities, that he that is neat and cleanly in his collusions shall never want people to practise them upon. I cannot forbear one example which is still fresh in our memory. Alexander VI. never did, nor thought of anything but cheating, and never wanted matter to work upon; and tho' no man promised a thing with greater asseveration, nor confirmed it with more oaths and imprecations and observed them less, yet understanding the world well, he never miscarried.

"A Prince therefore is not obliged to have all the fore-mentioned good qualities in reality, but it is necessary to have them in appearance. Nay, I will be bold to affirm that having them actually, and employing them on all occasions they are extremely prejudicial, whereas having them only in appearance they turn to better accompt; it is honorable to seem mild, and merciful, and courteous, and religious and sincere, and indeed to be so, provided your mind be so rectified and prepared that you can act quite contrary upon occasion, and this must be premised, that a Prince, especially if come but lately to the throne, cannot observe all those things exactly which make men be esteemed virtuous, being oftentimes necessitated, and irreligious, and therefore it is convenient his mind be at his command, and flexible to all the puffs and variations of fortune. Not forbearing to be good, whilst it is in his choice, but knowing how to be evil when there is a necessity. A Prince is to have particular care that nothing falls from his mouth but what is full

of the fine qualities aforesaid, and that to see and to hear him, he appears all goodness, integrity, humanity and religion, which last he ought to pretend to more than ordinarily, because men do judge by the eye more than by the touch ; for everybody sees, but few understand ; everybody sees how you appear, but few know what in reality you are, and those few dare not oppose the opinion of the multitude, who have the majesty of their Prince to defend them ; and in the actions of all men, especially Princes, where no man has power to judge, everyone looks to the end. Let a Prince therefore do what he can to preserve his life, and continue his supremacy, the means which he uses shall be thought honorable, and be commended by everybody ; because the people are always taken with the appearance and event of things, and the greatest part of the world consists of the people. Those few who are wise taking place when the multitude has nothing else to rely upon.

"There is a Prince at this time in being (but his name I shall conceal) who has nothing in his mouth but fidelity and peace, and yet had he exercised either the one or the other, they had robbed him before this both of his power and reputation."

After reading this *excellent* advice—especially that part which advises a "Prince" to become a "Beast," and to keep his mind, which is only Machiavelli's other name for *conscience*, at his "command and flexible to all the variations of fortune !" one can hardly wonder that someone wrote, "Machiavellian is become a usual appellation for perfidious and villainous politics."

In the next chapter he advises Princes to be cautious of becoming either odious or contemptible, holding "That Princes are to leave things of injustice and envy to the ministry and execution of others, but acts of favour and grace are to be performed by themselves, and always to propitiate the strongest party in the State. If the chief party, whether it be the people, or army, or nobility, which you think most useful and of most consequence to you for the conservation of your dignity, be corrupt, you must follow their humour and indulge them, and in that case honesty and virtue are pernicious."

This maxim is still a prominent part of the system of "doing business" in the City of London at the present time, and is practised by men (we will charitably suppose *unconsciously*) who

would hold up their hands in pious horror at the mere mention of the Florentine's name.

As before mentioned, great diversity of opinion exists as to Machiavelli's object in writing this treatise. The famous Chancellor Bacon maintained that it was with a good object and said, "We are greatly obliged to him and all such writers for telling us frankly what men do, and not what they ought to do, that we may guard ourselves the better against their wiles."

Afterwards, the no less famous Chancellor Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, expressed similar views as follows: "Machiavel was as great an enemy to tyranny and injustice in any government, as any man then was or now is, although he got an ill name with those who take what he says from the report of other men, or do not enough consider themselves what he says and his method in speaking." Others contend that he meant to practise a fraud on the youthful Lorenzo de Medici like that employed by Sunderland against James the Second of England, and that he desired the young man to use villainous and violent measures in order to accelerate his own downfall, while again it is held to be satirical. But the generally received opinion is that it was meant seriously. The more so from the fact that in his diplomatic career, which I shall touch upon presently, he was very successful, which could hardly have been the case unless he carried into active practice the doctrines he preached.

His account of the murder of Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliveretto of Fermo, Paul, and the Duke of Gravina, all of the Orsini family, by Duke Valentino, presents a striking picture of the state of Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The Duke Valentino having determined to attack Bologna and if possible make it the chief town of his Duchy of Romagna, a Dyet was held at Magione in Perugia which was attended by Cardinal Paul, the Duke of Gravina, Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliveretto da Fermo, Granipagolo Baglioni, and Antonio da Venafro, sent by Petrucci, head of Sienna. After serious deliberations as to the greatness and disposition of Valentino, the Dyet resolved to oppose him, and sent ambassadors to the Florentines and the Bentivoglie asking their assistance. But the Florentines having an old pique against the Vitelli and Orsini, not only refused to join the league, but actually sent their secretary, Niccolo Machiavelli, to Valentino offering him reception or assistance

"which he pleased to elect." The Dyet got the better of the fighting, and Valentino, probably acting under Machiavelli's instigation, offered them favourable terms of peace, and also proposed that instead of fighting each other they should join together and attack some other States. These "Articles" having been signed, it was agreed that Singaglia should be the object of assault by the new enterprise. In furtherance of this object, Vitelli and the Orsini were invited to meet the Duke Valentino at Singaglia, and on his departure for that place on the 30th December, 1502, he imparted his design to eight of his principal intimates, "That when Vitellozzo, Paul Orsini, Gravina, and Oliveretto should come to meet him, two of his favourites should be sure to order it so as to get one of the Orsini betwixt them (assigning every couple his man) and entertain them till they came to Singaglia, with express injunction not to part with them upon any terms until they were brought to the Duke's lodgings and taken into custody." This order was carried out faithfully, as Machiavelli goes on to say, "That these three Princes being arrived in the presence of Duke Valentino saluted him with great civility, and were as civilly received; and each of them as soon as they were well observed by the persons appointed to secure them, were singled and disposed betwixt two of them. But the Duke, perceiving that Oliveretto was wanting (who was left behind with his regiment, and had drawn it up in the market-place for the greater formality) he winked upon Don Michael (to whom the care of Oliveretto was assigned) that he should be sure to provide that he did not escape. Upon this instruction Don Michael clap'd spurs to his horse and rid before, and being come up to Oliveretto, he told him it was inconvenient to keep his men to their arms, for unless they were sent presently to their quarters they would be taken up for the Duke's, wherefore he persuaded him to dismiss them and go with him to the Duke. Oliveretto, following his counsel, went along with him to the Duke, who no sooner saw him but he called him to him, and Oliveretto, having paid his ceremony, fell in with the rest. Being come into the town and come up to the Duke's quarters, they all dismounted and attended him up, where being carried by him into a private chamber, they were immediately arrested and made prisoners. The Duke then mounted and commanded their soldiers should be all of them disarmed.

Oliveretto's regiment being so near at hand were plundered into the bargain. The brigades which belonged to Vitelli and Orsini being at a greater distance, and having notice what had happened to their generals, had time to unite, and remembering the discipline and courage of their masters, they kept close together and marched away in spight both of the country people and their enemies. But Duke Valentino's soldiers, not content with the pillage of Oliveretto's soldiers, fell foul upon the town, and had not the Duke by the death of several of them repressed their insolence, Singaglia had been ruined. The night coming on and the tumult appeased, the Duke began to think of his prisoners, resolved that Vitellozzo and Oliveretto should die, and having caused them to be guarded into a convenient place, he commanded that they should be strangled; but they said nothing at their deaths that was answerable to their lives, for Vitellozzo begged only that the Pope might be supplicated in his behalf for a plenary indulgence. Oliveretto impeached Vitellozzo and laid all upon his back. Paul and the Duke de Gravina were continued alive till the duke had information that his Holiness at Rome had seized upon the Cardinal Orsini, the Archbishop of Florence, and Meffer Jacopo da Santa Croce, upon which news on the 18th January, 1503, they also were both strangled in the Castle of Piene after the same manner."

As a statesman, Machiavelli undoubtedly was responsible for many of the disturbances which took place amongst the many States into which Italy was divided at that time. As secretary of the Council of Ten, which was the governing body of the Florentine Commonwealth, a position which he held for fourteen years, from 1498 to 1512, he displayed such great capacity for intrigue and knowledge of diplomatic ways, that he was always chosen for all the political missions that were necessary. He was sent as Ambassador to the King of France on four separate occasions, as Envoy to Popes Pius III. and Julius II. to Cæsar Borgia, in whose camp he spent three months, and also as Ambassador to the Emperor Maximillian to conduct the intricate negotiations, which at that time and indeed ever since existed, in regard to the Italian provinces which belonged to the Empire of Austria. On the restoration of the Medicis, in 1512, he was banished from the city, and the following year arrested on a charge of complicity with the Solderini in their conspiracy

against the Medici. He was tortured, but endured the horrors of that agonising, joint-sundering engine, the rack, without confessing anything. He was soon pardoned, and the Medicis procured him the post of Historian of Florence at a fair salary, in recompense of having unjustly suspected him of treason. Many are of opinion that he *was* concerned in the conspiracy, but it is most probable that the Medicis would not have procured him the appointment unless they had convinced themselves of his innocence.

"The History of Florence," which he wrote in his official position of "Historiographer," as he was termed at the time, consists of eight books embracing the period between 1215 and 1494, and though a work of almost faultless accuracy in detail, and of high literary merit, it bears internal evidence of having been written to order, as on every possible occasion the Medici family are lauded, while his account of the death of Lorenzo de Medici would entitle him to rank with the greatest of the old Roman Sycophants. He says, "The last part of his days was full of sorrow and disgust, occasioned by the distemper of his body; for he was sorely afflicted with intolerable pains, which brought him so low that in April, 1492, he died in the 43rd year of his age. Never was there any man, not only in Florence, but in Italy, who departed with more reputation for his wisdom, nor more lamentation to his country, and because upon his death many desolations were like to ensue, the Heavens themselves did seem to presage it. The spire of the Church of St. Riparata was struck with thunder with such fury, that a great part of the steeple was destroyed by it, to the great consternation of the City. All the inhabitants of Florence, and all the Princes of Italy, bewailed him, which was particularly manifested by their several compliments of condolence, and whether they had reason or not for what they did, the effects which succeeded for a while after, did clearly demonstrate; for being deprived of his councils, Italy could not find anyone remaining able to satiate or restrain the ambition of Lodovico, Duke of Milan, for want of which, after his death, much seeds of dissension brake forth, as have perplexed and embroiled all Italy ever since."

His "Military Art," in seven books, was written during this period, 1512 to 1520, "and make him pass with the Duke of Orbino, for a man very capable of drawing up an army in

battalions." The Duke, however, was wise enough not to try his theory, even upon a single squadron.

As a novelist he wrote "The Marriage of Belphegor," in which he expresses the opinion that "the souls of men were in the right on't, and it was their wives that sent them to Hell," but as he was very unhappy in his married life the reason for this and the generally exaggerated sarcasm of the book is easily accounted for. He was trying to avenge his own sad fate in that respect, and heaped opprobrium on the female sex collectively, as an outlet for the bad feeling he entertained for his wife individually.

In the edition (1674) of his works previously referred to, is a letter from Machiavelli to Zanobius Buondelmentius in vindication of himself and his writings, in it he wrote, "I would use some means to wipe off the many aspersions upon my writings. I have yielded to the entreaty of Giulio, and the rest of the company, not only because I am sufficiently (both by the restraint of our Press and the direction of the person I write to) assured that this letter will never be made publick, but that I esteem it a duty to clear that excellent Society from the scandal of having so dangerous and pernicious a person to be a member of their conversations, for, by reason of my age, and since the loss of our Liberty, and my sufferings under that monster of lust and cruelty, Alexander de Medici, set over us by the Divine Vengeance for our sins, I can be capable of no other design or enjoyment than to delight and be delighted in the company of so many choice and virtuous persons. But that I may avoid the loquacity incident to old men, I will come to the business. If I remember well the exceptions that are taken to these poor things I have published are reducible to thre.

"First, that in all my writings I insinuate my great affection to the Democratic Government, undervalue that of Monarchy, which last I, as it were, persuade the people to throw off.

"Next, that in some places I vent very great impieties, slighting and villifying the Church as author of all the misgovernment of the world, and by such contempt make way for Atheism and Profaneness.

"And lastly, that in my book of the Prince I teach monarchs all the execrable villainies that can be invented, and instruct them how to break faith, and to oppress and enslave their subjects."

To the first accusation he replies, " That God himself never made but one Government for man, and that this Government was a Commonwealth."

To the second, " I do not deny but that I have very frequently in my writings laid the blame upon the Church of Rome, not only for all the misgovernment of Christendom, but even for the almost total destruction of Christian Religion in this province, but that this discourse of mine doth and can tend to teach man impiety or to make way for Atheism, I peremptorily deny ; and for proof of my innocence, and that as I do undoubtedly hope by the merits of Christ and by faith in Him, to attain Eternal Salvation, I shall in a few lines make that matter possibly a little clearer."

The " few lines " consist of nearly five folio pages of tortuous argument.

And to the last that " My treatise being both a satyr against them, and a true character of them."

The publisher, as he calls himself, who does not favour us with his name, gives the following account of how he became possessed of it, being in doubt as to the object of Machiavelli's writings. He proceeds as follows : " In this perplexity I had the good fortune to meet with this letter of his own writing, which hath delivered me from those scruples and furnished me with an opportunity of justifying this great person by his own pen. Receive then this choice piece with benignity, it hath never before been published in any language, but lurked above eighty years in the private cabinets of his own kindred, and the descendants of his own admirers in Florence, until, in the beginning of the Pontificate of Urban VIII.th, it was procured by the Jesuits and other busiebodies and brought to Rome with an intention to divert that wise Pope from his design of making one of Niccolo Machiavelli's name and family a Cardinal, as (as notwithstanding all their opposition) he did, not long after. When it was gotten into that city, it reached not those who had the judgement and curiosity to copy it, and so came at length to enjoy that privilege, which all rare pieces (even the sharpest Libels and Pas-quils) challenge in that Court, which is to be sold to strangers, one of which, being a gentleman of this country, brought it over with him at his return from thence in the year 1645, and having translated it into English, did communicate it to divers of his friends,

and by means of some of them it hath been my good fortune to be capable of making thee a present of it, and let it serve as an apology for our author and his writings, if thou thinkest he need any."

This letter is dated the 1st April, 1537, but as Machiavelli died on the 22nd June, 1527, ten years earlier, it must necessarily be a forgery. The fact that it found its way to Rome through the *Jesuits* is in itself suspicious, and if the accounts of his death be true the hope of eternal salvation he expresses was simply a myth.

Jovius calls him a scoffer and atheist, while Benet says, "When Machiavelli was just adying he was seized with this fancy. He saw a small company of poor scoundrels, all in rags, ill-favoured, half-starved, and in short in as bad a plight as possible. He was told that these were the inhabitants of Paradise, of whom it is written, 'Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.' After these were retired, an infinite number of grave, majestic personages appeared, who seemed to be sitting in a senate-house, and canvassing the most important affairs of State. There he saw Plato, Seneca, Plutarch, Tacitus, and others of like character, but was told at the same time that these venerable personages, notwithstanding their appearance, were the damned, and souls of the reprobated, for 'for the wisdom of this world is at enmity with God.' After this he was asked to which of these companies he would choose to belong: and answered, 'That he had much rather be in Hell with those great geniuses, to converse with them about affairs of State, than be condemned to the company of such lousy scoundrels as they had presented to him before.'

Others relate it rather differently, making Machiavelli say "He would rather be sent to Hell after his death than go to Paradise, because he should find nothing in Heaven but a parcel of beggars, monks, hermits, and apostles, whereas in Hell he should be with Popes, Cardinals, Kings, and Princes."

Another writer says, "Many other stories of the same kind are related of him, but it is more than probable they are all false, and nothing more than the fictions of bigots to defame the man, because they disliked his books."

Everyone must form their own opinion of Machiavelli; it is best done from a careful perusal of his works, still if "the face is

the index of the soul" I should not have cared to trust him far, judging from the portrait of him in the old edition to which I have referred. It depicts a stern and sinister face, but I agree with Harrison, the celebrated author of "Oceana," who observes of him, "A very ingenious man, and the best-skilled in matters of policy and government, perhaps, of all who have written upon these subjects."

However, I have no doubt that he suited his writings and doctrines to the days in which he lived, and the people amongst whom he dwelt, bearing in mind their characteristic vices, many failings, the "corruptions of a degenerate age," and the turbulent and bloody times, when each State warred with its neighbour, and used strength, cunning, finesse, or murder to compass its end, and overthrow its enemy.

As far as his public conduct was concerned, he seems to have been honourable and upright enough, and he certainly suffered horrible tortures as the apostle of freedom, so it seems curious that he should have been such an utter villain as most writers make him out. He was inconsistent perhaps at times, or rather his conduct appeared so. He would do an enemy to death in most cold-blooded and perfidious fashion one day, and the next be patriotically self-devoted and ready to suffer for the sake of his well-loved Florence. An enigmatical man with a dual nature, blending the good and the bad in a queer contradictory fashion. At any rate, it seems to me that he was honest in one way—he did not enrich himself. He left several children in a state of indigence, which affords presumption of his integrity.

His death took place at Florence in the year 1527, and for over two hundred years he lay in his narrow grave undistinguished by slab or tablet. Now, in the Church of Santa Croce, a monument stands erected to his memory by an English nobleman, who paid this honourable tribute to the memory of one who had been neglected in that respect by his own countrymen.

L. MACLEAN.

## A New Ghost Story.

IT was a wild, wailing evening in December—that melancholy month when nature pipes in such a minor key that it almost seems as if the dying year were yielding up its existence reluctantly ; and as on the evening in question there was an occasional rumble of thunder in the air, and the sea was sobbing as well as the wind, when the waves broke fretfully against the rocky pediment on which Kinver Castle stood, it might fairly be said that the diapason of dreary sounds had achieved itself.

Nevertheless, though the weather was so inclement, and the scene without so chill and cheerless—indoors, that is to say inside the pleasant drawing-room at Kinver, everything spoke of warmth and comfort, and all the means and appliances of enjoyment were at hand. For a bright fire was crackling and sparkling in the grate and diffusing a rich, crimson glow through the room ; a fascinating little table, with the green baize cover which connotes whist, was drawn up before it, and round it were gathered a group of four merry fellows, who, having cut for partners, were just sitting down to play their ante-prandial rubber, when one of them, whose name was Granby and who was the master of the house, suddenly surprised all the others by uttering an exclamation of dismay. But the fact was, that having chanced to look out of the opposite window whilst he was seating himself, he caught sight of an object approaching the house, which at once sent his feelings into an uncongenial channel and caused him to exclaim ruefully, “O’Mara, by all that’s unfortunate ! Was there ever anything so tiresome ? He will spoil our rubber, he will bore us to extinction with his long stories, and as I see he has got his portmanteau with him he will never know when to go. Oh, I say, what *is* to be done ? ”

“ Why did you ask him to come, Bobbie dear ? ” called out Miss Granby from the further end of the room, where she was engaged in playing a game of chess with an old maiden aunt who was a sort of duenna to her and at the same time helped her to do the honours of her brother’s bachelor establishment.

"Oh, it was done in a weak moment, confound it! I merely said that if he happened to pass this way he might look us up. But I had no idea the beggar would take me at my word, and so soon too. However, that is neither here nor there nor anywhere at the present juncture. The question is, now that he *has* come what's to be done with him?"

"Put him in the haunted room, Bobbie," suggested Miss Granby sweetly, "and if you do, you'll find he will not stay long enough to wear out his welcome."

"My dear Nea, you're a mine of wealth to me!" cried her brother delightedly. "The very thing. Of course I'll put him there; and if that doesn't drive him away in less than no time I'll eat my hat. It is a most extraordinary thing," added Granby, turning to his friends, "but no one has ever been able to sleep in that room in my memory, the noises are so fearful. The last person who persisted in spending a night there was an old aunt of mine, and she was found dead in her bed in the morning. Of course, it may only have been a coincidence—indeed I feel pretty sure it was nothing more—but then it was a coincidence of such a very disagreeable nature that it has given the room an additionally evil reputation, and so terrified the servants that none of them would enter it after dark for any consideration. But excuse me for a moment, boys, I must tell Johnson where the portmanteau is to go." And with these words Captain Granby quitted the room.

Meanwhile the unwelcome and ill-fated guest had driven up to the door and got into the hall, where he soon found himself in the hands of the butler and the footman. And when with their assistance he had uncoiled his manifold wraps and emerged from them, he looked so long and narrow that his figure suggested the idea of a house which had been run up by contract and not made to last. His face, too, was thin and sallow, and so devoid of all comeliness, that on one memorable occasion when he was going to be photographed, his best friend advised him to be taken praying in his hat. Moreover, his career from first to last had been most unsuccessful—he used to say himself that at his initial exam., at Sandhurst, the only thing he passed in was health, and since then, failure had become chronic with him—and when to these things are added that he had a somewhat lugubrious tone of voice and a good deal of the

Emerald Isle on the tip of his tongue, it will be admitted that he was rather heavily handicapped all round. And yet he was not without his points. For he had a sort of mother-wit which stood him in good stead sometimes ; he possessed a soft heart and an even temper ; and there were many who declared that he was not such a fool as he looked by any means. Be that as it might, however, on this particular evening when he was ushered into the drawing-room, instead of spoiling the rubber, as his host had anticipated, he at once went over to the other end of the room and joined the ladies, to whom, presumably, he made himself most agreeable, as his droll sayings and racy anecdotes elicited many a merry laugh from them during the next hour or so. Indeed, one of the whist-players—a gallant dragoon named Herrick, who was very much smitten with Miss Granby—looked rather indignant when he perceived that she derived so much amusement from the Irishman's society. And when he found that “the same sort of thing” went on all through dinner and after it, his indignation deepened into spleen, which he vented by declaring to his host after the party had broken up, that O'Mara's jokes made him sick, and that he thought him the most consummate ass he had ever met in his life !

“Well, I think he behaved rather well this evening on the whole,” said Granby ; “he didn't bother *us*, and he certainly seemed to get on swimmingly with the ladies. As for my sister, I have not heard her laugh so heartily for ages.”

“Oh, that was merely her good nature,” objected Herrick. “I am sure the fellow bored her horribly—indeed, I saw a look of boredom on her face once or twice, only she was too kind to let *him* see it.”

Howbeit, as a matter of fact, the young lady instead of being bored, subsequently informed her brother that she had spent quite a pleasant evening and so had her aunt. “I declare, Bobbie,” she said, “your interesting Islander isn't half bad—in short, both auntie and I found him most entertaining—I am rather glad he came after all.”

“Nevertheless, I don't think you would like him to stay,” returned her brother. “I fancy you'd find that a little of him is quite enough. But now I must go up and see, or rather hear, how he is getting on in the haunted room. I daresay by this time he is buried in slumber.”

" Well, I don't think you will say *Requiescat in pace* to him ! " cried the lively girl, laughingly.

" No, certainly not—the very reverse of that, whatever it may be. And now good-night, my pet, don't stay up any longer or you'll lose your roses." And turning away as he spoke, Granby forthwith began ascending the stairs—very noiselessly—and in a few minutes afterwards he had reached the door of the room occupied by his victim, who at first appeared to him to be conversing with somebody, though afterwards it became evident that he was merely talking to himself.

" Well, if this is English hospitality it's cold comfort!" ejaculated the shivering Irishman, evidently drawing the bed-clothes more closely round him as he spoke, for owing to the craziness of the door every sound he made was distinctly audible to the listening ear. " I must say me friend Granby was a cool customer to put me in such a draughty hole, for those confounded windows seem to think it is their business to let in the air instead of excluding it, and, as for the noise, I do believe the rats are dancing a jig at this moment in the wainscoting. Well, Granby, me boy, when you come to O'Mara Castle—though that stately edifice only exists in the air at present—I'll give you a warmer reception than you've given me." And with this generous resolve the soliloquist turned over, and in a short time afterwards it was easy to gather from his regular and very stertorous breathing that he had at least found temporary oblivion of all his worries and discomforts in the pleasant land of dreams.

It may readily be imagined that great anxiety was felt and manifested next morning to know how O'Mara had got on through the night. But when he at length appeared at breakfast he looked such an altered being that no one thought of chaffing him ; and while the ladies of the party almost started on first seeing him, Granby certainly experienced some very unpleasant qualms of conscience at having subjected him to an ordeal which had affected him so strangely. The fact was, O'Mara was no longer the same man that he had been the day before. Pale, haggard, and heavy-eyed, with a scared look and a nervous manner, it seemed as if somebody else had taken his place for the time being. And instead of chatting easily and unconstrainedly as it was his wont to do, his words were few and

sometimes hardly coherent, while in answer to all inquiries as to how he had fared in the haunted chamber, he returned the same invariable reply, namely, that he had really nothing whatever to tell.

"Oh, Mr. O'Mara, you must have seen something, or you wouldn't look so queer and so unlike yourself as you do!" cried Miss Granby. "Did the old lady who is supposed to haunt that room appear to you? Or did you hear her? Or was the bed so uncomfortable that you could not sleep? Or what?"

"Oh, thank you, Miss Granby, the room was quite comfortable!" answered O'Mara with polite mendacity. "But I never can manage to sleep well in a strange bed—that's all—and I positively have nothing to tell you about the ghost."

"Hah!" said Granby to himself, "there's more in that than meets the ear, and we must get it out of him." So in accordance with this determination, as soon as breakfast was over he followed his guest into the smoking-room, and there cornered him so resistlessly that the hard-pressed Irishman had to yield in the end, at least to a certain point, and at last he said with very great reluctance:

"Well, me boy, if you *must* know, there's an end on't. I did see something, and heard something too—a thing that has made me feel down-hearted ever since—but what it was I certainly cannot and will not tell you."

"Oh, but how did it all come about? And what did you see?" persisted Granby.

"Well, you see, Johnson told me about the room being haunted—so my rest was disturbed by bad dreams—but at two o'clock I awoke to find the whole place enveloped in a sort of vapour, and, through the cloud at the end of my bed, a ghastly, fearful face was peering at me. It was the face of a woman, and looked like that of a corpse—white and livid—and I declare to you, Granby, me blood literally curdled in me veins as I saw the Thing coming nearer and nearer to me until at last it was so close that I could feel its cold breath on me cheek. It then whispered something into my ear which I would have given a great deal not to have heard; but I can't tell what it was because I promised I wouldn't, so don't urge me any more, like a good fellow."

And with these words, which were uttered wildly and in great excitement, O'Mara rose from his seat and hurried from the room to escape further importunities.

"Confound the beggar!" said Granby as he watched his retreating figure. "He seems half daft to-day, and do you know I'm beginning to repent of having put him in that beastly room after all. It seems hardly fair, or——"

"Oh, nonsense, Granby!" exclaimed Herrick. "The poor chap is in a blue funk, that's all! I can quite believe that he had a nightmare, and I've no doubt he heard noises too, but I'll swear they didn't proceed from anything more formidable than a *ridiculus mus*. Bacon says," he added, "'that nature never puts much that is precious up in a garret four storeys high,' and he is quite right. I never knew a long, lanky, overgrown fellow like O'Mara yet who hadn't the heart of a chicken."

"There you are quite wrong," objected Granby. "O'Mara is not a coward; if he were I would not have put him in that room, anxious as I was to get rid of him, because it wouldn't have been safe."

"Safe!" sneered Herrick. "Surely, Granby, you are not going to tell me that *you* believe in ghosts or any nonsense of that kind?"

Granby reddened. "No," he said, "I don't believe in them any more than you do, but I believe there is some unexplained mystery connected with that unlucky room, which scares everybody, and, valiant as you are, my friend, I venture to say you would not like to spend a night in it yourself."

"Oh, wouldn't I though?" cried Herrick. "I'll sleep in it this very night if you'll let me. May I?"

"Oh, certainly!" answered Granby. "There is nothing to prevent you from trying it if you like, and if you really intend to sleep in it I shall tell Johnson to put your things there."

And so the matter was settled.

But Granby felt by no means satisfied with the existing aspect of affairs as regarded O'Mara's state of mind. And though he knew that *he* could do nothing more than what he had already done, he had such unlimited faith in his sister's powers of persuasion that he straightway went to her, and explaining to her how uncomfortable he felt, begged her to try what she could effect in the matter.

With this request she willingly complied, and moreover was pretty confident of succeeding in her mission, too. But contrary to her expectations the interesting Islander, as she had dubbed him, proved firm and unyielding, and seemed so determined to stick to his colours that she was obliged to content herself with having at last extorted a reluctant half-promise from him that some time in the course of the ensuing year he might divulge part of the secret to her, though nothing, he said, could induce him to tell it to her or anybody else before that.

Meanwhile, it was observed that on the following morning O'Mara came down looking much brisker and brighter than he had done the previous day. While as for Herrick, whose appearance was so eagerly anticipated, though his cheek was not blanched nor his eye wild (as O'Mara's had been), it was patent to everyone that he, too, had something on his mind which he did not want or wish to talk about. However, in answer to the innumerable questions with which he was plied, he at length admitted that he was awakened in the middle of the night by such a loud noise that he thought at first the walls must be falling in, while at the same time the whole room seemed to be filled with the fumes of sulphur. "Someone was moving about quite close to me, too," he added, "who, after having kept me on tenterhooks for a good while, at last rushed out through the door (which I could swear I shut before going to bed), and thence clattered down the corridor, where the noise finally died away in the distance."

"By Jove! that's deuced strange!" cried Weston, who was a brother officer of Herrick's, "but, my dear fellow, why didn't you get up and pursue the phantom or whatever it was? If you had done that, the whole thing might have been cleared up by this time."

"Oh, I should like to see *you* do it!" exclaimed Herrick sarcastically. "I bet you a pony you don't do it under similar circumstances yourself!"

"Done!" said Weston. Let *me* sleep there to-night, Granby, and if I don't unravel the mystery for you, I'm a Dutchman."

So the third night the haunted chamber had a new occupant. But while O'Mara and Herrick had little to say for themselves after having encountered its perils and dangers, Weston had

simply nothing at all. He appeared at an early hour, looking as fresh as paint and as merry as the Swiss Boy, and turning smilingly to his host, who he saw was looking towards him with great expectations, he said, "I'm really very sorry to disappoint you, Granby, but the truth is I have no revelations whatever to make. I saw nothing, I heard nothing, nor were there any noises except what were made by the rats in the wall, and only that the bed happened to be uncommonly hard and uncomfortable and the cold was simply marrow-piercing, I could have slept quite snugly and undisturbedly there till morning."

Now this was drawing a blank cover with a vengeance, and everybody looked proportionately disappointed. But in the midst of their discomfiture the door opened and in stalked O'Mara, who said he found he would have to leave that day as he had a little matter of business to attend to in Town.

"What day is this?" asked Miss Granby as soon as he had made the announcement.

"The first of January," he answered.

"Oh, then it's next year!" she observed, illogically but emphatically, "and so I claim the fulfilment of your promise, Mr. O'Mara. No, no," she went on, in answer to an incipient demurrer from him. "I shall not let you off, and as you are a man of honour you must not break your word."

"I have no intention of breaking it, me dear Miss Granby, but if you remember, I stipulated that I was to tell the secret to yourself alone. You and I and nobody by, and not *pro bono publico*."

"So you shall," said the obliging young lady. "If you will come into the next room with me now we shall have it quite to ourselves—it is always empty at this hour." And so saying she rose from her seat and led the way into the library, followed by O'Mara, who, as soon as they were alone together took up his parable in the following manner:

"Now, me dear young lady, I have a very solemn revelation to make to you, but you must not feel nervous, and, above all, you must bear in mind that you are never to tell what I'm going to confess to you, to anybody—it must remain locked up in your own breast for ever and a day. I know that crusty old bachelors say," continued O'Mara, "that nature made no provision either in the mental or physical economy of a woman for

keeping a secret, but I'm proving that *I* don't believe in that ungallant assertion, by making you me confidant now—and here is what I have got to tell you: On the night of my arrival, when I saw the apparition which you have already heard about, I began to shiver and to shake as if I had got a sudden attack of ague, and when the Thing said to me, 'Are you awake, O'Mara?' though I answered promptly and respectfully, 'Yes, ma'am!' I declare you could have knocked me down with a feather if I had been standing up, which luckily I wasn't. 'Then,' said the apparition, 'as you *are* awake, we can converse a little together, and I have something to give you.' 'Oh, you darlin',' says I, 'that's welcome news, for since I came to this country, the only thing anybody has given me is advice, and I'm sick of that.' 'Ah, well,' says she, 'it's a little bit of the same that *I* have got to give you, too, but then you'll find mine is valuable, so listen to me. Imagination is my name, and I chiefly make my home in Ireland, though of course I'm to be found elsewhere also, and my advice to you is, whenever you are put into a cold, uncomfortable room (where there are better rooms to be had), just *invent* a ghost story, and my word on it, you will find plenty of fools ready to believe everything you say, and lots of fellows only too glad—just for bravado, you know—to occupy your quarters whilst you lie snugly and cosily in theirs.' So having said this the old party vanished away, and now, me dear young lady," added O'Mara, "you've got me secret and me tale, and 'pon me honour, I think you have a bit of me heart too, for yours is the pleasantest face I ever saw, and——"

"Oh, Mr. O'Mara, Mr. O'Mara," said the laughing girl as soon as she could find voice to speak, "it's a bit of your head that I would rather have than anything else, for you have outwitted us all and made fools of every one of us—you have indeed, and most cleverly you did it, too. But before I let you go, will you tell me how you managed to frighten even the doughty Mr. Herrick?"

"With the greatest pleasure in life," returned O'Mara gallantly. "I tied walnut shells to the cat's feet and a lighted cigar steeped in sulphur to her tail, and having first let her softly into the room, as soon as she had made noise enough I then let her softly out again—so there you are!"

"Capital, capital! Most ingenious!" cried Miss Granby in

great delight, "and," she added, "I am really glad that you succeeded so well with *him*, because he is so bumptious and conceited."

The Irishman smiled benignly. "Well, now," he said, "is there anything more that you would like to hear before I go, for you know I could refuse you nothing? And I can tell you Miss Granby, that having had to disoblige you temporarily on Thursday gave me a pain in me heart which I'll carry to the grave with me."

"Oh, Mr. O'Mara, how can you say such a thing! What is truth?"

"Fact, I assure you. But what's the good? I'm a fool for me pains—or me pain—for there's not a soul in this house who would ever care to see my ugly face again!"

"You are quite mistaken," cried the young lady graciously, '*I should.*' And then with a blush which seemed to the admiring Hibernian the pink of perfection, she added, "And what's more I hope you will come again, and I promise that if you do you shall have a warm reception, and instead of the haunted chamber, the very best room in the house!"

This was satisfactory. In fact eminently so. And as O'Mara observed, it would have added a cubit to his stature only that he tried to keep himself down for the sake of appearances. But though his fair hostess regarded him thus amicably, it was a very different matter with the other members of the community—who one and all received the relation of facts with such very black looks that it was evident they were thoroughly put out by them. Indeed as for Herrick he could hardly be appeased, and at once announced his intention of riding after "*the scoundrel*," and informing him that neither he nor any other jackanapes should play practical jokes on *him* with impunity.

But Granby, who was a sensible man, and who had regained his equanimity much sooner than the others, said quietly:

"Sit down, my dear fellow, and don't talk nonsense. We are all in the same boat. He has befooled and beaten each of us, as I may say, with our own weapons. But then he did it so cleverly, that I, for one, not only forgive him but feel that we all owe him a vote of thanks for having invented *A new ghost story!*"

## **A Lover's Secret.**

BY MRS. LOVETT CAMERON,

Author of "In a Grass Country," "A Devout Lover," "A Lost Wife,"  
"This Wicked World," Etc.

### **CHAPTER XXVIII.**

#### **A HALF CONFIDENCE.**

" Speak to me as to thy thinkings,  
As thou dost ruminante, and give thy worst of thoughts  
The worst of words."

—SHAKESPEARE.

" I DON'T like your friend, Jack."

" Not like old Lance? Why he is the best fellow in the world!"

" So he may be from a man's point of view, but, speaking as a woman, I consider him eminently disagreeable."

The lovers were seated together on a couch in the drawing-room at Castle Regis.

It was after dinner, and the gentlemen had just come into the room.

Lord Castlemere and Sir Herbert on the hearthrug were discussing the new County Councillors; Lady Mary and Mrs. George Verinder at the centre table, paper and pencil in hand, were jotting down the items of the trousseau which was shortly to be ordered in London; whilst Lance was happily engaged in relating some of his American shooting experiences to a strong-minded and slightly elderly cousin of Lord Castlemere's, a certain Miss Horatia Ludlow, who by reason of her cousinship, was accustomed to pay an annual visit at this season of the year to her distinguished relative.

Jack and Agnes were seated a little way off from the rest, at the further side of the spacious square room. It seemed to be the right thing to do—to isolate himself thus with his lady-love when she came to dine at his Uncle's house, and Jack submitted with a good grace to the exigencies of the situation. He was

very anxious to do the right thing with regard to Agnes. Whether or no it afforded him much pleasure to do so, was another matter.

He had taken his *fiancée* in to dinner, and the conversation between them had been laboured and constrained. He began to find out that he had not very much in common with the beautiful woman who was to be his wife. She did not care for the things he was interested in, whilst he did not enter in the very least into those that interested her.

When he came in from the dining-room and saw her seated alone upon a distant sofa, he conceived it to be his duty to go and sit down beside her. He went because it was evidently what was expected of him, not in the least because the mesmerism of love attracted him to her side. In point of fact—although a dozen times a day he endeavoured to persuade himself of the contrary—at the bottom of his heart he was aware that he was not in love with her.

When—without wasting many days after he had first met her again—he had asked her to be his wife, there had been a certain flush upon him of generous exaltation. He had felt himself to be guilty with respect to her, he had treated her badly, and he was anxious to give her the reparation he owed her. That was the way he had put it to himself. Then, too, she had been very clever with him. She had played her cards well. She had been modest and retiring in his presence, she had never put forward a finger to beckon him back to her, and yet she had somehow allowed him to understand that she had always loved him and had remained single for his sake.

So, for the second time she had entrapped him.

His own generous impulses had carried him towards her, and her skilful handling had done the rest.

But when the deed was done, and he had had time to calm down again, Jack awoke to the fact that he was no happier than he was before ; that his senses were perhaps enslaved, but not his heart, and that the woman to whom he now stood irrevocably plighted was utterly unsuited to him.

It was of no use certainly to dwell upon it. This time there would be no possibility of a retreat, he could not jilt her for the second time. He would have to abide by the consequences of what he had done.

Outwardly he paid her the most scrupulous and affectionate attention. She had no reason to complain of him. He was a model lover. He consulted her wishes, forestalled her smallest fancies, and treated her with the utmost deference and consideration ; at the same time when he was alone with her, he found that he had very little to say to her.

During dinner she had entertained him to a description of the wedding garments she intended to order when she went up to London next week with Lady Mary. Jack, to whom the subject was profoundly uninteresting, had some difficulty in stifling his yawns. And yet he had taken the keenest notice of a certain simple white cotton dress trimmed with white ribbons that had stood by his side three years ago in a far-away country church ! The memory of that frock had come back to him once during dinner this evening with a horrible rush of pain and hopelessness. He had had to thrust it away from him with a violence which, for a moment, had driven the blood from his heart and left him cold and sick.

When he took his place by Agnes after dinner he racked his brains for a congenial subject of conversation, so that he was startled into something like excitement by her opening remark concerning Lance Parker.

"I am sorry you don't hit it off with old Lance, Agnes—what has he done to offend you?"

"He has done nothing, it is what he does not do that I object to. He does not seem to think it worth while to cultivate my society. He never speaks to me, he never even looks at me!" she added angrily, for to be insensible to her beauty was a crime which she never forgave in a man.

Jack laughed. "Poor Lance ! he certainly is not a lady's man—he never was. But see, he is making up for lost time, he is quite animated by old Horatia Ludlow."

"Surely he can't admire that old maid!"

"No, I don't suppose he admires her, but I daresay he likes her. Horatia goes well to hounds, and is fond of sport of all kinds ; I wouldn't mind wagering that Lance is spinning one of his big-game yarns into her delighted ears."

"He is very ugly," remarked Agnes with some disgust, after a pause, during which her eyes rested with disfavour upon Mr. Parker's podgy frame and round red face. "No woman could

ever be attracted by him, unless she were old and faded like Miss Ludlow, but then to be sure I don't suppose he has ever been in love in his life."

The remark made Jack meditative, and for the second time that evening a flood of memories came back to him with such overwhelming strength, that when he did break the somewhat lengthened silence that followed, he said something which he had always intended to say at some time or other to his betrothed, but which, but for the thoughts called up by her chance remark, he would certainly not have spoken about to-night.

"Agnes," he said very seriously, "there is something I want to tell you—about my past."

Agnes had been lying listlessly back against the satin cushions fingering the soft feathers of her fan, her eyes fixed with lazy admiration upon the glitter of the diamonds upon her white hands.

Now she sat bolt upright and looked at him eagerly.

"I have a confession to make to you."

"It is about the 'Creature!'" thought Agnes with suppressed excitement. "I was sure he would tell me about her some day! But what a fool he is, poor Jack! not to hold his tongue!"

She only nodded and looked at him with interest and expectation in her large eyes.

"You are a woman of the world, my dear," began Jack somewhat nervously, for now he was launched upon it it was astonishing how reluctant he felt to disclose even a part of that secret of his past, and how difficult he found it to select the right words in which to do so. "You must, I know, have guessed at the causes which made me treat you so badly in the old days. You must have guessed the truth that I was tied to someone else—in fact I told you so I think in the letter I wrote to you."

"Did you indeed?" thought Agnes to herself, beginning to put the pieces of her broken puzzle together very completely. Aloud she said :

"My dear Jack, do not apologize. Of course, as you say, I am a woman of the world, and I know that every man has a little history of this nature in the background of his life. I suppose there are very few men, if any, who settle down and marry without having gone through some kind of experience

with persons of that class, and I do not think a wife should inquire too minutely into her husband's past, so long, of course, as the whole business is broken off before marriage."

Now the whole of this speech horrified and disgusted Jack to the last degree. Having been all his life singularly free from the degrading influences to which she so glibly alluded ; he could not quite believe his ears that a refined and well-brought-up young lady should be acquainted with, far less speak about a subject which is usually tabooed in the presence of ladies, even when they are married.

A hot flush of shame and repulsion mounted to his brow, he looked at her fixedly and with an expression which, although she was far from divining his uncomplimentary thoughts, she realized to be one of distinct disapproval, and which filled her consequently with a vague disquiet.

What Jack was thinking was that, after all, she was a vulgar, coarse-minded woman, in spite of her beauty and good birth, that she was devoid of true feminine instincts, and that, Heaven help him ! she was the woman whom he was obliged to make his wife !

His whole being recoiled from her—a horrible dismay at what he discovered in her swept over him, and then suddenly he recollect ed that once—if not twice—in his former intercourse with her, a sure but intangible instinct had warned him that Agnes Verinder was not a pure natured woman.

Not for ten thousand worlds, would he soil the holy memory of his lost Madge by laying bare her story to such a woman !

Something he must tell her, no doubt, but that sweet secret of his ten days' wife should never now be hers to scoff at, or to blacken with her vile and unhallowed suggestions.

" You mistake me entirely," he said at length coldly and hardly. " What I was about to tell you has nothing to do with the things to which you allude. I have loved another woman devotedly and intensely it is true ; but there was no degradation in that love. She was a lady."

" Indeed ?" and Agnes elevated her eyebrows into an unbelieving curve. " A real well-born lady ? Dear me, how interesting ! "

And to herself she said, " As if I hadn't got his letter offering her an allowance locked up in my dressing-case at home ! "

"As well-born as yourself," answered Jack moodily, looking down upon the carpet.

"And upon what terms pray, were you with this well-born lady, at the time you made love to me in the garden of this very house?"

With perfect truth Jack replied, "I was engaged to be married to her." Had she worded her question differently he might have experienced greater embarrassment in answering it.

Agnes, to do her justice, did not believe it. That letter which she knew almost by heart seemed to her to point to something very different. She was angry with him for attempting to hoodwink her.

"He had far better have been honest with me," she thought. "I could have been generous to him. Now, I cannot forgive him because he is deceiving me."

"All this business, Jack, is at an end now? I have a right to ask."

"You have every right. It is completely at an end."

"I must of course exact your promise never to see this—this person again—and never to write to her!"

A dark shadow swept over his face. Watching him closely she was surprised to see that for a brief instant his features were shaken with some deep emotion—for a moment he seemed unable to speak. Then at length, in a low, broken voice, he replied :

"You need have no apprehensions. I can never see her again—never. She is dead."

Then suddenly he rose and left her side, and went to the further side of the room.

Agnes remained where he had left her for some moments buried in thought. His final words had surprised her, they had even disappointed her—for, if they were true, they baulked her of her revenge. Of what use to her would be that letter she had treasured so long, if the woman to whom it had been addressed were dead?

But was she dead?—that was what Agnes doubted. That was what it remained for her to find out.

After a while she rose slowly and walked towards the rest of the party. Jack had seated himself by Miss Horatia, and was

listening half interestedly to Lance's vivid description of a Bear hunt.

Agnes came and stood at the back of her aunt's chair.

"We were just wanting you, dearest child," said Lady Mary's gentle, caressing voice, as she slipped her hand into that of her future daughter.

"Your Aunt thinks we ought to go to Mrs. Waterson's for your walking dresses—she tells me she is considered newer now than old Madame Dentelle."

"I feel inclined to go to her for everything, Lady Mary!" cried Agnes, throwing herself at once with ardour into a subject which was very dear to her. "She has the most perfect taste and fit, and she is very moderate in her prices. Latterly, I have left everyone else for her."

It had been settled that as Mrs. George's mourning for her father was still too deep for her to care to be in town, Lady Mary and Agnes should go together for a month to London and tackle the mighty mysteries of the trousseau together, whilst Mrs. George remained to take care of Sir Herbert. This arrangement pleased everybody—and no one more so than Lady Mary. The energetic little woman looked forward with the keenest delight to a campaign amongst satins and laces, for which her long absence from England had renewed a youthful eagerness; and being sincerely fond of Agnes, in whom her implicit faith was still perfectly unshaken, she looked forward with pleasure to having her with her entirely.

Agnes, who felt herself to be a favourite with her, always shone at her best in Lady Mary's presence, and she knew that she would have a much better time of it in London under her care, than with her Aunt George, who was by no means either blind or indulgent to her faults.

It was the heyday of her success and triumph, and Agnes felt more inclined for the flattery of Lady Mary's affection, than for Mrs. George's open and often unpleasantly expressed disapproval.

Altogether, the plan was popular with everyone concerned, not excepting Jack and Lance, who promised themselves a good month of slaughter of pheasants and foxes together, whilst the ladies were preparing for the great event after their own manner in town.

Agnes sat down to the table beside her aunt, and threw herself with eagerness into the discussions on frills and furbelows. But not so eagerly but that her eyes and ears remained watchful and alert in the direction of her lover.

The Bear hunt was over—Lance was chaffing Jack about some incident of their boyish days.

"You should have seen him, Miss Ludlow," she heard him say, "he hired the most awful screw you ever saw in your life, his head was all on one side, and he had only three legs and they weren't sound ones, and a little stump of a hairless tail about an inch long, and yet he went like the very mischief! Jack hadn't got any proper breeches or boots, he looked a pitiful object! He had tied string round his legs to keep his trousers down——"

"Do attend, Agnes," here said Mrs. George. "Will you put down three teagowns or four? Lady Mary thinks you had better have plenty."

"Oh, yes, Aunt,"—then followed a long dissertation on teagowns. The next thing Agnes heard from the trio beyond on the ottoman, was Jack's voice saying heartily and earnestly to Miss Ludlow :

"Yes, Horatia, you are quite right, he is the best fellow in the world!—he is my oldest and best friend. We've been in and out every scrape of our lives together, haven't we, old man? And there never was such another Damon and Pythias to be found upon earth, as our two selves!"

Agnes heard it, and like a flash of lightning a sudden thought rushed into her mind! Lance Parker, this bosom friend of Jack's, would know all about it! If she wanted to find out who and what was this woman he had once loved, if she suspected that he was deceiving her and that she was alive still, if she wanted to get a clue as to where she was to be found so as to brandish that letter of the past effectively before her husband's face, and thereby hold a perpetual thumbscrew over him, to whom could she better apply than to Lance Parker for the necessary information?

The thought fired her with excitement.

"He looks soft and silly," she thought, glancing at him askance out of the half-closed lids of her almond-shaped eyes. "The sort of man whose head might be easily turned by a handsome woman. Nobody has ever yet made love to your friend Lance,

I'd stake my existence upon that. Well, you shall have a little taste of the delusive delights of flirtation, and if I am not able to make you lose your ugly toad's head in the course of half an hour to the extent of getting out of you all that I want to know, then my right hand will have lost its cunning ! ”

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### LANCE HAS DOUBTS.

Be sure of it: give me the ocular proof,  
No hinge or loop to hang a doubt on.

—SHAKESPEARE.

LANCE PARKER was considerably surprised some two days later—on a day when Miss Verinder was well aware that Jack had gone with his mother and Miss Ludlow to pay a duty visit to his maternal grandmother, a venerable dame of ninety who lived about an hour's journey by rail from Northminster—to encounter the familiar pair of bay ponies which that young lady was accustomed to drive, trotting up the avenue to Castle Regis.

Contrary, too, to her accustomed method of ignoring his existence with as few words as possible, Miss Verinder, who was alone in the pony-carriage, met him with a charming smile and reined in her ponies to speak to him.

“ What a piece of luck ! ” she cried gaily. “ I drove over, half hoping to find you in, Mr Parker. My aunt has a headache and papa is deep in a new edition of some tiresome old Greek author. I really had nobody to speak to, and I thought perhaps as everybody at Castle Regis has gone off for the day, that I might find you in the same plight. I was only afraid you might have gone out shooting.”

“ No ; I thought as Jack is away I would have a day off. I was just going out for a walk.”

“ That is capital, because now you can come for a drive with me instead, which will be much more amusing. Come, jump in ! ”

“ Are you not going up to the house to see Lord Castlemere ? he is at home.”

“ Dear old man, I love him, but he does so bore me ! No, I think I will take you for a turn across Northerly Common and over the hills instead.”

There was nothing for it but to obey her and get into the carriage by her side.

She turned the ponies' heads round and they bowled quickly together down the long avenue.

For some time Agnes exerted herself to the utmost to be agreeable. She pretended—oh, magical secret for the subjugation of man!—to be deeply interested in him. She asked him questions about his parents and early life; she affected a deep sympathy for his orphaned condition, and was moved almost to tears by his allusion to his mother's death. Then she talked to him about his tastes, told him how much she admired men who were fond of sport, and enquired banteringly how many lovely ladies' hearts he had broken in the course of his travels.

Lance began to find her a very delightful companion. He had had no idea that she could be so charming, and whilst she talked to him, she flung glances at him out of those magnificent bewildering eyes, which were not without a certain effect upon him.

It was new to him to be so talked to, and looked at, and insensibly he felt flattered and pleased by her unwonted attention. He had not hitherto liked her very much, believing her to be a splendid and fashionable lady, totally unworthy of Jack and he had kept out of her way with a surly indifference to her charms, which had ended by piquing and annoying her.

Now he began to think that he had misjudged her, and that she had more in her than he had supposed. Her glorious beauty beaming for the first time for him and him alone, made even his sober head go round a little, and he felt—although he was but half conscious of it—the subjugation of his judgment to the spell of her strange and dangerous fascination.

Just when she had got him thoroughly under her hand, as it were, Agnes cleverly diverted the conversation from himself to Jack.

They talked about Jack's improved health, about her future plans for his happiness, about his devotion to his mother. Agnes quickly gave Lance the impression that she was deeply attached to him, and that she meant to live solely for his happiness.

This, as he was a good man and a loyal friend, naturally pleased him.

Just when their conversation was at this point, Agnes

suddenly remarked with a sigh, whilst her eyes wandered dreamily across the autumn landscape :

" There is only one thing that troubles me ; shall I be able to make him happy ? "

" How could you fail to do so, Miss Verinder ? " cried Lance with quite a creditable display of gallantry. " He would be a poor sort of man indeed, who would fail to be happy if you tried to make him so ! "

" Thanks for your good opinion, Mr. Parker, but you do not quite understand me. With the best will in the world many a loving wife has failed, because she has not been the sole possessor of her husband's heart. Tell me, Mr. Parker, you are his best friend and you ought to know the truth, do you think he has really and truly got over that old affair ? "

Lance glanced at her quickly.

" What old affair ? " he asked weakly, with a view to gaining time.

" Oh, you know quite well. His first love, I mean."

Was it possible that Jack had told her all about Madge ? Lance was surprised. Yet, when he came to think of it, he supposed a man might easily conceive it to be his duty to make a clean breast of the past history of his heart to the lady he was about to marry. There was nothing, perhaps, very wonderful in it. And so Jack had loved Madge after all, then !

" You must pardon me, Miss Verinder, for being unable to give you any information about Jack's love affairs," he said presently, cautiously picking his words as he spoke. " You must know much more on this subject than I do, and as a matter of fact, friends as we are, Jack has never in his life made any confidences to me of that description."

" Still, you knew all about her," persisted Agnes, quite undaunted by his answer.

Lance stuck his eyeglass firmly into its place, looked straight ahead at the view, and held his peace.

" She was very lovely, was she not ? " hazarded Agnes tentatively, below her breath.

" She was loveliness itself ! " burst forth Lance incautiously. " It was the radiance of her goodness of heart which lent its beauty to her face ; " and then he bit his under lip and was sorry he had spoken so impetuously. Agnes shot a sideways glance

of triumphant amusement at him from under the shadow of her dark-fringed lids.

"Poor thing, it was very sad her dying," she continued regretfully.

Then, of course, Jack knew that she was dead! Lance could not bear to talk about it, he only nodded. There was a little pause; then, in exactly the same tone of voice and as though finishing her previous sentence, Miss Verinder remarked:

"If, indeed, she did die, that is."

Lance positively jumped.

"What! What do you mean, Miss Verinder? How can there be any doubt about her death? What made you say that?"

Agnes shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"I only said *if*, Mr. Parker! I suppose you are *sure* that she is dead then?"

"I—I was told so," stammered Lance. He could not bring himself to describe to Agnes Verinder how he had gone into Fairley Churchyard and had seen the stone-masons bringing in that terrible grave-stone.

"One is often misled, you know, by what people tell one," remarked Agnes airily.

"For Heaven's sake explain what you mean!" cried Lance, by this time thoroughly startled. "Has Jack told you that there is any reason to doubt her having died?"

"Oh dear no. Jack tells me that she is dead; he quite believes it, I suppose—doesn't he?"

"Then is it possible—and yet, how should it be?—is it possible that you yourself have heard something privately about Madge?"

A little gasp of irrepressible relief and joy escaped her lips. Her name was *Madge* then!—that was something to have found out! Madge—*what*, she wondered!

"I have heard nothing definite, of course," she replied, "at the same time it is nothing wonderful to lose sight of a person when one is out of England for some years, as you and Jack have been and Miss Madge—dear me! I never can remember her other name."

"Durham," supplied Lance, tumbling headlong and with a beautiful unsuspectingness into the trap spread beneath his feet.

"Oh, yes, to be sure ! This Miss Madge Durham appears to have kept up no communication with Jack for some time—has she ? "

"Not that I know of—but indeed, Miss Verinder, you must not ask me. I know nothing ; I did not even know, in fact, that Jack had been attached to her until you told me—and as to her being alive still, I can hardly believe it ; and since Jack himself has told you that she is dead——"

"My dear Mr. Parker," interrupted Agnes, "it is Jack's own manner rather than his words that have made me fancy he is not quite certain of what has become of her. As you may imagine, I, who am about to become his wife, am not at all anxious to revive her memory in his heart—it was only because I fancied you would know the truth about her that I ventured to ask. Pray forgive the curiosity of a loving woman, and let us drop the subject for ever."

"By all means, Miss Verinder," acquiesced Lance somewhat eagerly ; and they talked of other things.

But Lance by no means dropped the subject in his own mind. The conversation that had taken place between them haunted him day and night, and the idea that in some fashion he had been mistaken, and that Madge was not really dead, grew upon him more and more. All at once, as he pondered that night, during the course of some hours of sleepless tossing on his bed, upon what Miss Verinder had said, he recollectcd with a flash that her younger aunt had been Margaret Durham too—in one instant the truth became revealed to him as a possibility. It might have been her aunt who had died, and by whose grave he had wept !

And yet Jack had told Agnes that Madge Durham was dead !

That was what he could not understand—for, even supposing that he had been deceived, it was scarcely possible that Jack could have made the same blunder as himself !

He felt that at any cost he must speak to Jack upon the subject. Only, as it was a difficult and delicate topic to broach, he resolved to wait until a suitable opportunity of doing so should present itself. For the next two days no such opportunity seemed to occur.

A big battue of the pheasants the next day, a large party of

men and a houseful of dinner-guests in the evening, precluded all possibility of private conversation.

The following day Lady Mary and Agnes were to go to London. Lord Castlemere, whose delight at his nephew's engagement led him into all sorts of extravagances on Agnes' behalf, had taken a furnished house for the ladies for a month in Hill Street, and insisted that the brougham and a pair of horses for their use should go with them to town.

"I cannot have you running yourself off your legs, or knocking about in draughty cabs," he said to his sister-in-law; "I shall have you laid up again. You will take the brougham to town with you, Mary—I insist upon it; so let me hear no more about it."

"You are very good to me," answered Lady Mary gratefully and affectionately, "I do not know how to thank you."

"I have nobody else to be good to, my dear, save you and Jack, and Jack's future wife. And as to thanking me—I want no other reward save to see a son of Jack's in another year's time. I am growing old, Mary; but if I can only live to see an heir to the old place before I die I shall be content."

The ladies, accompanied therefore by a respectable retinue of men and maidens, set forth from Northminster by a mid-day train. Lord Castlemere and Jack saw them off from the station, and Lance went out rabbit-shooting by himself to pass away the time.

But in the evening the friends found themselves alone together once more in Jack's little den, and Lance felt his heart thump oddly within him, when he realised that the moment had come to speak on the subject that was so much in his mind.

Somewhat abruptly, for Lance was not good at beating about the bush, he plunged boldly, and a little tactlessly, into the unknown waters he was about to trouble.

"Jack!"

"Yes, old man."

"Miss Verinder spoke to me the day before yesterday about poor Madge Durham."

Jack turned round in his chair and regarded him intently and with the utmost astonishment.

"Agnes—spoke to you—about—*Madge Durham!*" he repeated, very slowly and in accents of utter bewilderment.

And then he waited for more, staring at him intently and fixedly.

"Yes—she—she asked me—a question—I—a—imagined you had told her about her—" Lance began to feel very uncomfortable, and his words came out lamely and stammeringly; the way Jack was staring at him upset him.

"I never mentioned her name to her in the whole course of my life," said Jack with decision.

"You don't say so! Then how the dickens did she know all about her? Why, she asked me if I thought you had got over it, and so on—"

"Wait a bit, Lance. Did Agnes mention the name—of—of Madge to you? or did you, by any chance, suggest it to her?"

"Well," after a moment's pause, "now I come to think of it, I believe I *did* say her name."

"Ah! I thought so!" Jack's brow grew black and angry, the whole thing was plain to him. Agnes had been pumping Lance, and Lance had unsuspiciously allowed himself to be pumped!

"I'm really awfully sorry, Jack. I hope I did no harm. But of course when Miss Verinder questioned me as if she knew all your past history and appeared to be aware of everything—"

"Don't apologize, old chap. There is no harm done." Then after a pause he added with an effort. "Of course she knew a good deal, I told her enough, for her to be quite justified in desiring to know more."

His honour to his future wife made it incumbent on him to say this. He could not say what he thought of her, even to Lance, but he felt more acutely than ever that the future outlook of his life was not a brilliant one.

"After all," he thought bitterly to himself, as clasping his hands above his head, he stared moodily into the fire and puffed away at his pipe. "After all, we can each go our own way when once we are married—she only wants the title, I suppose, and my mother and uncle want me to have a son. When that object is accomplished, I shall have pleased everybody, and nothing more will be required of me."

Then Lance spoke again, and this time with a curious ring of earnestness.

"Now we are on the subject, I feel that I must say something

more to you. Jack, you are quite *sure*, I suppose, that poor Madge is dead?"

There was a little silence. The clock ticked upon the mantel-shelf and a coal fell out noisily into the fender.

"Why do you ask me this?" said Jack at last, in a low, smothered voice.

"Because Miss Verinder has put it into my head that there may be a mistake, and that you yourself are uncertain about it."

"Good Heavens, Lance. What has Miss Verinder got to do with it?" cried Jack impatiently and irritably; "she knows nothing, absolutely nothing. She was only trying to find out—she—" his words died away suddenly. He was tongue-tied about Agnes, he could not give utterance to what he felt about her.

There was another brief silence, then he resumed in a quieter voice, from which he studiously banished all expression of emotion:

"I know that she is dead because her aunt wrote and told me so at the time."

"What, Miss Margaret?"

"No, the old lady,"—he paused, had he said no more, who knows how this history might have ended? But it takes but a little thing sometimes to alter the whole course of human events.

Two or three words did it in this case.

"She died the winter we were in Algiers, three and a half years ago," he added gravely and sadly after that moment of silence.

It was Lance's turn to be startled and amazed. He sat up in his chair and his ruddy face turned positively crimson.

"My dear fellow, nothing of the sort! *Three years*, did you say? Three months, you mean—she died this July."

"Good God, Lance! What do you mean? You are mistaken, besides you cannot know, for you were away. I tell you I had a letter from old Miss Durham, I got it at Algiers. I shall never forget the moment I received it—never, to my life's end! If you love me, Lance, never speak of that sweet girl—of that sad death again!" His voice broke, he turned very pale, and leaning his elbow on his knee he put up his hand to shelter his face from his friend's eyes.

Lance got up from his place and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"My dear fellow, I *must* speak. There is some horrible mistake somewhere. Madge was alive in June, for I had a letter from her."

Jack lifted a face of horror—a face as white as death—towards him. His lips parted, but no words came from them.

Lance was fumbling in his leather pocket-book.

"Look at this, and judge for yourself," he said, and laid the sad little note of despair and misery he had received from her upon Jack's knee.

Jack stood up and went to the table to look at it by the light of the lamp. As he read it his hands trembled so violently that he could scarcely distinguish the written words. He knew it was from her, although he had never received a letter from her, yet her writing seemed familiar to him, even had not the "Madge" at the end placed it beyond a doubt.

"When did you get this?" he asked presently, in a voice that struggled to be calm.

"I found it at my Club when I got home, it was a month old. I was too late to help her. I went down to Fairley the next day. The village, I was told, had been decimated by Typhus fever, numbers had died of it. I went up to the house, the butler told me that she was dead, afterwards I stood by her grave in the churchyard."

"And yet she went up to London?" said Jack thoughtfully, turning the note over and over in his hands.

"Yes, and failing to meet me she must have lost heart and gone home again, to fall sick and die; at least, that is how I imagine it must have been—unless—unless——"

"Unless—*what*, Lance?"

Jack turned round and faced him. Their eyes met. They were both pale and both terribly in earnest, both were struggling with that strange restraint which had always oppressed them at the mention of this woman's name.

The old rivalry blazed up anew between them, the old jealousy that had slumbered in her grave awoke once more over the living memory of her whom they believed to be dead.

"Say what you were going to say," said Jack shortly, and almost imperiously—"unless what?"

"Unless the old woman deceived *me* as she deceived *you*. Unless it was the aunt who was dead, and not Madge. I confess that the idea seems wildly improbable, and yet it kept me awake all last night! It was Miss Verinder I believe who put the thought into my head; she seemed to think——"

Jack interrupted him with a gesture of impatience.

"Never mind what Miss Verinder said—she knows nothing, her words don't count. Lance, it is only your own wild fancy, we have not a shadow of proof! Tell me again what happened when you went to Fairley."

Lance told him the whole story, omitting no single detail of his visit. At the end, Jack flung himself down wearily into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

"The butler would not have told you a lie," he said at last "Why should he? And you say both men were dressed in mourning, and that they offered to take your name to the old aunts? You should have gone in and seen them; they might have told you more. But I cannot doubt that she is dead. There was a motive in the old woman's lie to me, for she must have intercepted my letters and have known that I loved her niece, but what motive could the butler have had in inventing such a thing to you?—it was true enough, no doubt."

He refused to listen to Lance's doubts, for it seemed to him that they were entirely founded upon Agnes Verinder's ignorant utterances.

Long after Lance had left him, he sat on alone, a prey to the most bitter remorse.

That Madge should have been alive still, so short a time ago, to suffer and to believe him to have deserted her, was a grief so stupendous, that his mind was incapable, for the time being, of grasping any other thought. All else was swallowed up in the agony which this reflection caused him.

As to Lance Parker, he too began to think the fancy that Madge might still be alive was a mere "Midsummer madness" of his own heated imagination. Jack, who knew so much more than he did, believed it to be impossible. No doubt Jack was right. He had learnt a good deal more this evening than he had ever known before about Jack's past relations with Madge, and he thankfully exonerated him in his mind from much of which he had hitherto believed him to be guilty.

He got himself to bed and slept soundly. Would his slumbers have been so tranquil had he known the secret which Jack guarded from him with such mistaken vigilance? With a shadow of a doubt still in the background of his mind, could he have rested peacefully, had he known that Madge had been actually Jack's wife?

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### CHAPTER XXX.

#### WHAT THE YELLOW KITTEN DID.

In faith and hope the world will disagree,  
But all mankind's concern is Charity.

—POPE.

LITTLE Johnny, tempted out by a fitful gleam of pale London sunshine, had stolen down the rickety wooden stairs and out into the street. He was too young to realise either that he was doing any harm, or that he was running into any danger by going out by himself. It had been very dull and lonely in the little back bedroom, where his mother was accustomed to leave him. He could not find little Tim O'Grady, because his mother had sent him to the fish-shop in the next street, with twopence tightly clenched in his grimy little fist, to buy a bloater. Johnny called out to him when he got down to the street, but Tim's favourite playground, the gutter, was empty that morning, and Johnny found himself alone. Whilst he was standing there, doubtfully looking about him on the doorstep, he caught sight of a little tawny-coloured kitten, stealing softly out from the railings of the house next door. She was a very ugly kitten, almost orange in colour and with a black splash half over one eye and down the side of her nose, which gave her a queer, dissipated look, as if she had been out all night, as, indeed, she probably had. She was, of all kittens, the most hideous and unattractive, yet, upon Johnny's sight at that moment, she beamed as a very phantom of delight. She recalled to his infant mind the baby kittens at the lodge at Fairmead Hall, with which he had played with poor little Frankie Trimmer, who had died of the fever so soon afterwards. Johnny scarcely remembered poor Frankie, but the kitten awakened keen and excited reminiscences in his heart at once. He became immediately persuaded that

she was the very identical kitten he had played with on that eventful day.

"Titty, top titty!" he cried loudly, clapping his hands joyfully together. The orange kitten naturally ran away, and Johnny ran after her. Down Boston Street, round the corner of James Buildings into Paradise Row, and finally out into the Edgware Road itself, the chase was kept up with unabated ardour; Kitty, well ahead, with her yellow tail erect and her callow paws skimming lightly over the paving stones, and Johnny stumping along manfully on his thin little legs after her.

It was not such an unequal race as might be supposed, for the kitten was very small and pretty nearly as half starved as himself, whilst Johnny, though he had only had a dry piece of bread soaked in water for breakfast, had the spirit of a true sportsman to urge him on, and would never have given in as long as he could stand upright, had fortune only been favourable to him. But alas! on entering the Edgware Road the kitten vanished!

Whether she fled out into the crush of omnibuses on the crowded road, and safely gained the other side unseen by her pursuer, whether she went down head foremost into some haven of refuge below, whose uplifted grating presented itself conveniently in her need, or whether some open shop door received her little, flashing, quivering body within its hospitable portals, will never now be rightly known, and is moreover unimportant to this tale to discover. Suffice it to say that the prey escaped, and that Johnny was left standing breathless and discomfited in the middle of the pavement, looking about him in disconsolate dismay. Presently, however, he caught sight of the trees of the Park and a fresh excitement arose in his childish mind. He had not seen any trees since he had left Fairmead; these, no doubt, were the self-same trees he had left behind there. He started off at a trot to get to them.

They were brown and leafless, it is true, but still they were real trees, and presently he caught sight of real green grass beneath them, and his excitement knew no bounds.

Little recked the child of the dangers into which he was rushing, when, filled with the one idea of reaching that beautiful grass as quickly as possible, he dashed fearlessly into the crowded thoroughfare opposite the Marble Arch.

A brougham and a pair of smart-stepping brown horses were turning out of the Park. There was a coronet on the carriage, and a sleek, well-fed coachman and footman sat on the box, and there were two ladies, one middle-aged but still pretty and the other young and very handsome, inside.

Suddenly there was a cry, a rush of people from the side, a shout from a policeman running hastily forward, and, with a violent jerk backwards, that sent the handsome brown horses almost on to their haunches, the brougham came suddenly to a standstill.

"Good gracious!—what on earth is the matter?" cried the elder lady, putting her head out of the window.

There was a crowd already hemming in the carriage, for it is astonishing in what a twinkling of an eye a crowd will gather in a London street—and some cried one thing and some another. "What a shame," shouted one, "he might have pulled up in time—knocking down a little thing like that!" whilst the coachman angrily defended himself.

"What is it?" repeated Lady Mary eagerly, "is anyone hurt? what has happened?"

The tall footman shouldered his way through the crowd.

"It's a little boy, my lady—ran out just in front of the 'osse—it wasn't Baines' fault, the child oughtn't to have run across."

"Is he run over? is he hurt?" cried Lady Mary breathlessly. "Let me out at once, Thomas."

"My dear Lady Mary," remonstrated Agnes. "Pray do not get out in all this dreadful crowd, you will be crushed to pieces!"

"Let me out instantly," was all she said, addressing the footman, who opened the door and helped her out.

Miss Verinder knew better than to subject her grey velvet mantle to the hustling of a shabbily-dressed crowd—she sat on safely but disgustedly in her corner.

"How I hate Quixotic people!" she thought, "why on earth couldn't she leave it to the police to manage?—and now we shall be late for my appointment with Mrs. Waterson!"

Lady Mary was kneeling upon the ground, tenderly supporting in her arms the prostrate form of a tiny child. His face was white as death, his lips were bloodless, his eyelids closed. His long dark eyelashes swept his shrunken white cheeks, where the

blue veins could be plainly traced beneath the fine, delicate skin. He did not move.

"Oh—is he dead? is he dead?" cried Lady Mary with a great gush of womanly pity at her heart, "fetch a doctor somebody at once."

"I think he's only swooned, mum," said one of the policemen, who was helping to keep off the crowd from the little fallen figure. "I don't think the 'oss touched him—only to knock him over."

"I knows he didn't, my lady," here put in the coachman, who had babies of his own, and was sincerely distressed by what had happened. "I pulled up as sharp as ever I could, and Sultan, he shoved him down but he didn't kick out a bit, he stood as still as a lamb—another inch and he must have stepped on him—but I see what happened—he's only bruised a bit, and his head hit against the road pretty hard, that's all."

"We'd best take him to the hospital in a cab, mum," said the policeman. "Shall I call one?"

"I will take him myself, not to the hospital but to my own house," she answered with decision, gathering the little, frail morsel of humanity up in her arms.

"Let me carry him for you," said a gentleman standing in the crowd. But Lady Mary clung to her charge; he was so light—such a very feather-weight—a child could have lifted him.

The footman opened the carriage door.

Miss Verinder shrank back into her corner.

"Oh, not in here! surely not in here, Lady Mary!" she cried, recoiling in deep dismay. "You cannot possibly take the poor little wretch into the carriage—why—he is filthy! his clothes are covered with mud!"

Lady Mary looked at her. There was a gleam of contempt in her eyes—for the first time her beautiful favourite failed to please her. "You can get out and go home in a cab if you prefer it, Agnes," she replied coldly, and lifted the child without another word into the carriage. "Thomas, jump into a hansom at once," she said, turning to the footman, "go and find Dr. Graham and tell him to come to Hill Street instantly, as quickly as he can."

Then she gave her address to the policeman and bade him call, so that he might aid her in discovering who the child

belonged to, and, the crowd quickly dispersing, the carriage drove rapidly back to Hill Street.

Little Johnny lay for some moments as though in truth his white little soul had for ever fled away to some happier world.

Lady Mary chafed his cold hands and held her salts bottle to his nose, Agnes never offering to help her, but sitting in the opposite corner with her smart dress well gathered about her lest it should brush against the muddy little boots that hung over the side of the elder woman's lap, whilst she regarded the whole performance with an expression of repulsion and dislike impossible to describe.

Lady Mary only seemed to her to have gone mad.

Just as they were turning into Hill Street, a quiver passed over the child's frame, and with a long, soft sigh the lips parted slowly and the breath of life came back to him. His eyes opened slowly, and fixed themselves gravely and a little vacantly upon the kindly woman's face so close above his own.

"He is alive! he is alive, thank God!" cried Lady Mary with something like a sob of joy. "You are quite safe, darling, with friends, don't be afraid."

But Johnny was not at all frightened. The vacant eyes little by little, grew into life and consciousness—what bright brown eyes they were! so like that other pair that were gazing eagerly down into them! Presently a little colour stole back into the baby lips, and he smiled quite happily and confidently up at her.

"See, see, Agnes! he is smiling! he cannot be much hurt."

"Well, that is a comfort at any rate. I am sure I hope that policeman will find out who he belongs to and come and take him away to his parents, the whole of our morning will be wasted as it is."

Lady Mary scarcely heard her. She had raised the child's head on to her shoulder, he lifted his hand uneasily to his forehead and murmured in his baby tongue:

"Zonny's head bad," and his eyes closed again wearily and dully.

The carriage stopped at their own door, and Lady Mary carried the child tenderly into the house and upstairs to her own bedroom.

Presently Dr. Graham arrived and was closeted for some time

with her upstairs, and Agnes walking about in angry impatience up and down the drawing-room below, began to realize the distressing fact that the important claims of her trousseau were to be entirely laid aside for the present, for, Lady Mary intended evidently to devote herself to this "beggar's brat," as she called him in her own mind, to the complete oblivion of her own affairs.

This being the case she determined to go out with her maid and find her own amusements at Howel & James' and Marshall & Snellgrove's.

When she returned, some two hours later, Lady Mary was coming down the staircase. Her sweet wrinkled face was beaming, and she seemed to have forgotten Agnes' ungraciousness, for she took her eagerly by the hands.

"My dear, the best of news!"

"You have found the child's parents?"

"Oh, no. Not a chance of it! There is not a single mark on any of his clothes. That is nothing. But Dr. Graham says there are no bones broken, and no internal injuries at all. He was only stunned with the fall and shaken by the fright, and must be kept in bed for a day or so. But only think, Agnes! Dr. Graham says he never saw such a thin child in all his life, it is quite terrible, he is nothing but skin and bones, he must have been literally starving! isn't it shocking? he is to have beef-tea and chicken-broth and turtle-soup and milk, everything I can think of—" and the dear little lady looked so happy, as some women—God bless them!—do when they are able to be of practical use to their fellow creatures, and yet all the time the gold-brown eyes were full of unshed tears.

Agnes deemed it judicious to kiss her affectionately and to express some sort of sympathy for the child.

"Poor little creature! how lucky for him to have fallen into such kind hands as yours, dearest Lady Mary!—but I do hope you will find out who he belongs to."

"Oh I don't care about that! I should like to keep him."

"To *keep* him!" repeated Agnes, aghast. "What, *always*?"

"Yes, why not? I am devoted to children and now you are taking Jack from me, I should like something to look after. Ah, and do you know my dear, it is the most extraordinary coincidence, of course, but this child reminds me so strongly of what Jack was at his age! is it not strange? the same bright, brown

eyes and tiny features, and long tapering fingers like Jack's—only dear Jack never looked half-starved as this poor mite does!"

Agnes treated this of course as a flight of fancy, and smiled indulgently at the notion.

At the bottom of her heart she earnestly trusted that Lady Mary might soon grow tired of her new fancy, or that the child's relations might come and claim him, she even went to the length next morning of examining the advertisements in the papers, but nobody seemed to have lost a child, and her future mother-in-law was more eager than ever to retain her new toy.

Johnny got better—he lay wide awake in his bed, he ate his food ravenously, he played with a wooden soldier which was brought to him—he complained no longer of his head. By the afternoon of the second day he was taken out of bed and dressed in a new suit of clothes which Lady Mary had sent out her maid to buy for him and sat quite happily upon his benefactress' lap by the fireside. Lady Mary thought it her duty to question him.

"Who is your father, my dear?"

"No farzer," replied Johnny, quite gaily as though mentioning an amusing fact.

"And your mother?"

"Es—want muzzer—Zonny want muzzer," and the brown eyes looked eagerly and a little pitifully about the room, as though in quest of her.

"Where does your mother live, Johnny?"

"In Steet," replied Johnny with decision.

"Which Street?"

"Dirty Steet," answered the child.

"Can't you remember the name of the street?—try, Johnny?"

Johnny only shook his head and became wrapped up in the absorbing occupation of steadyng his wooden soldier on Lady Mary's elbow.

"Who lived in the Street?" persisted Lady Mary.

"Yellow Titty!" replied Johnny with a sudden animation.  
"I'se wun after Titty, and Titty wun away, Zonny couldn't catch Titty 'cos she wun so fast."

Nothing more could be extracted from him. Once or twice

he said that he "wanted muzzer," and his little face assumed a pitiful expression when Lady Mary told him she was afraid his mother could not come to him, but child-like he soon began to forget her, and to cling to the motherly arms of the kind woman who devoted herself to him. Lady Mary's elderly maid, too, came in for a share of his devotion—but from the beautiful Miss Verinder he shrank away in terror—nothing would make him go to her.

It was the evening of the second day, and Johnny had been put to bed. A little cot had been made up in the dressing-room opening out of Lady Mary's room. After her dinner she stole upstairs to look at him. Johnny lay in the beautiful sleep of innocent childhood. Good food and care had already wrought a change in him. There was a delicate flush on his cheeks, his tumbled locks strayed upon the pillow and his breath went and came with delicious regularity through his rose-bud baby lips.

Lady Mary bent down over his bed, shading the candle with her hands from his face. A mother who has loved her child, never forgets what he was like in infancy, and the extraordinary likeness of this little waif to her own son in his childhood, struck her once more with a strange and almost startling force.

Not only that, but on the baby brow, just where it was knit into a soft wrinkle between the eyebrows, there was a something—she hardly knew what—that recalled Lord Castlemere's face to her.

Her own grew a little pale, and she drew back with a strange quickening of her pulses. What wild thought was this which flashed suddenly through her mind!

At that moment the child stirred uneasily, his thin little hand flung back upon the pillow was stretched out towards her, and from his half-opened lips there came a faint mutter of baby words.

Lady Mary bent down again over the cot.

"Muzzer—my poor muzzer," said Johnny in his dreams.  
"Pay God, take care of muzzer."

The clock on the chimney-piece struck half-past nine.

Out in the streets it was raw and foggy—the pavements were

damp, the lamps gleamed with a faint and sickly light through the murky atmosphere.

Mrs. Waterson was driving home to her cosy house in the Regent's Park in a hansom. She was very late to-night—late and very tired. Her day's work had been full of worries. One of her women had spoilt a velvet skirt she was cutting out, and then had been so impertinent over it that she had had to send her away—another, a useful girl employed in the mantle-room, was ill with congestion of the lungs and had not been able to come—added to which, in addition to all her ordinary work, she had a large and very important order for a lady's trousseau on hand—and the lady having failed to keep her morning's appointment for the fitting of her wedding dress, everything, as far as that essential garment was concerned, had been at a standstill. Constance Waterson had seldom felt so worn out and so worried, she had eaten nothing all day but a couple of sandwiches, and her head ached from sheer exhaustion and fatigue.

Yet, as the hansom swung quickly round the corner of one of those dingy little streets through which lay her daily road to her home, her quick eyes caught sight of something which caused her to stop her cab and jump hastily out of it.

A woman lay upon her face motionless upon the pavement. The shabby, slender figure seemed familiar to her.

"I'd let 'er be, mum," said the cabman respectfully; "she's only one o' them drunk 'uns—it's the business of the police to look a'ter such as she."

But Constance had turned the woman's face towards the sickly glare of the lamp, and had recognised her at once as the girl in whose daily movements she had for so long taken such an unaccountable interest.

"She is not drunk, she is only ill," she said to the cabman. "I know her. I am going to take her home with me. Will you help me to get her into the cab?"

The man, grumbling a little, but hoping to be paid extra for the unaccustomed work, got down from his box. Between them they lifted the unconscious woman into the cab, which drove quickly on towards the Regent's Park.

At that very moment the church clocks in harmonious chorus were striking half-past nine.

Thus, in their direst need, these two poor waifs—the child and the mother—cast away upon the pitiless desert of the London streets, had been both strangely and almost miraculously rescued by the friendly hands of utter strangers from the dangers and perils which so hardly beset them.

*(To be continued.)*

## The Four Seasons.

### SPRING.

BRIGHT is the Spring and the world is fair,  
Bright is my heart and free from care,  
    Skies blue above me,  
    One true to love me,  
Trusting forsooth  
    Yet awhile in my youth,  
    Too fair ! Too fair !

### SUMMER.

Full promise has come and the summer heat,  
In my heart dear Hope begins to beat,  
    Under the trees love,  
    In perfumed breeze love,  
Counting alas !  
    The days as they pass,  
    Too fleet ! Too fleet !

### AUTUMN.

Seared are the leaves and the time is late,  
Seared is my heart and sealed is my fate,  
    Words when once spoken,  
    Vows when once broken,  
For ever are ended,  
    Ne'er to be mended,  
    Too late ! Too late !

### WINTER.

Chill are the blasts and the earth is cold,  
Chill is my heart and my life grows old,  
    Of what use are prayers,  
    To unburden cares,  
When youth is once past,  
    And out we are cast,  
    In the cold ! In the cold !

C. DAWSON.

# BELGRAVIA

*NOVEMBER, 1890.*

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## April's Lady.

BY MRS. HUNGERFORD,

Author of "MOLLY BAWN," "PHYLLIS," "A LIFE'S REMORSE," etc.

### CHAPTER XLVI.

"O life ! thou art a galling load  
Along a rough, a weary road,  
To wretches such as I."

THE crisis has come, she tells herself with a rather grim smile. Well, better have it and get it over.

That there had been a violent scene between Baltimore and his wife after dinner had somehow become known to her, and the marks of it still betray themselves in the former's frowning brow and sombre eyes.

It had been more of a scene than usual. Lady Baltimore, generally so calm, had for once lost herself, and given way to a passion of indignation that had shaken her to her very heart's core. Though so apparently unmoved, and almost insolent in her demeanour towards Lady Swansdown during their interview, she had been, nevertheless, cruelly wounded by it, and could not forgive Baltimore in that he had been its cause.

As for him, he could not forgive her all she had said and looked. With a heart on fire he had sought Lady Swansdown, the one woman whom he knew understood and believed in him. It was a perilous moment, and Beatrice knew it. She knew too that angry despair was driving him into her arms, not honest

affection. She was strong enough to face this, and refuse to deceive herself about it.

"I didn't think you and Beauclerk had anything in common," says Baltimore, seating himself beside her on the low lounge that is half hidden from the public gaze by the Indian curtains that fall at each side of it. He had made no pretence of finishing the dance. He had led the way, and she had suffered herself to be led into the small ante-room that, half smothered in early spring flowers, lay off the dancing room.

"Ah! you see you have yet much to learn about me," says she with an attempt at gaiety—that fails however.

"About you—no!" says he almost defiantly. "Don't tell me I have deceived myself about you, Beatrice. You are all I have left to fall back upon now." His tone is reckless to the last degree.

"A forlorn *pis-aller*," says she steadily, with a forced smile, "What is it, Cyril?"—looking at him with sudden intentness—"Something has happened? *What?*"

"The old story," returns he. "And I am sick of it. I have thrown up my hand. I *would* have been faithful to her, Beatrice. I swear that—but—she does not care for my devotion. And as for me—now—" He throws out his arms as if tired to death, and draws in his breath heavily.

"Now?" says she leaning forward.

"Am I worth your acceptance?" says he, turning sharply to her. "I hardly dare to think it, and yet—you have been kind to me—and your own lot is not an altogether happy one—and—"

He pauses.

"Do you hesitate?" asks she very bitterly, although her pale lips are smiling.

"Will you risk it all?" says he sadly. "Will you come away with me? I feel I have no friend on earth but you. Will you take pity on me? I shall not stay here, whatever happens. I have striven against Fate too long—it has overcome me. Another land—a different life—complete forgetfulness—"

"Do you know what you are saying?" asks Lady Swansdown, who has grown deadly white.

"Yes. I have thought it all out. It is for you now to decide. I have sometimes thought I was not entirely indifferent to you,

and, at all events, we are friends in the best sense of the term. If you were a happy married woman, Beatrice, I should not speak to you like this, but as it is—in another land—if you will come with me—we——”

“Think, *think*,” says she, putting up her hand to stay him from further speech. “All this is said in a moment of angry excitement; you have called me your friend, and truly. I am so far at touch with you that I can see you are very unhappy. You have had—forgive me if I probe you—but you have had some—some words with your wife?”

“Final words. I hope—I think.”

“I do *not*, however. All this will blow over, and——. Come, Cyril, face it! Are you really prepared to deliberately break the last link that holds you to her?”

“There is no link. She has cut herself adrift long since. She will be *glad* to be rid of me.”

“And you; will you be glad to be rid of her?”

“It will be better,” says he shortly.

“And—the boy?”

“Don’t let us go into it,” says he, a little wildly.

“Oh, but we must—we must,” says she. “The boy—you will——”

“I shall leave him to her. It is all she has. I am nothing to her. I cannot leave her desolate.”

“How you consider her,” says she, in a choking voice. She could have burst into tears. What a heart! and that woman to treat him so, whilst—— Oh, it is hard, *hard!*”

“I tell you,” says she presently, “that you have not gone into this thing. To-morrow you will regret all that you have now said.”

“If you refuse me—yes. It lies in your hands, now. *Are* you going to refuse me?”

“Give me a moment,” says she, faintly. She has risen to her feet, and is so standing that he cannot watch her. Her whole soul is convulsed. Shall she? Shall she not? The scales are trembling.

That woman’s face! How it rises before her now; pale, cold, contemptuous. With what an insolent air she had almost ordered her from her sight. And yet—and yet——

She can remember that disdainful face kind, and tender.

and loving! A face she had once delighted to dwell upon! And Isabel had been very good to her once—when others had not been kind—and when Swansdown, her natural protector, had been scandalously untrue to his trust. Isabel had loved her then, and now, how was she about to requite her? Was she to let her *know* her to be false, not only in thought but in reality. Could she live and see that pale face, in imagination, filled with scorn for the desecrated friendship that once had been a real bond between them.

Oh! A groan that is almost a sob breaks from her. The scale has gone down to one side. It is all over; hope, and love, and joy. Isabel has won.

She has been leaning against the arm of the lounge. Now she once more sinks back upon the seat as though standing is impossible to her.

"Well?" says Baltimore, laying his hand gently upon hers. His touch seems to burn her. She flings his hand from her and shrinks back.

"You have decided!" says he, quickly. "You will not come with me?"

"Oh, no, no, no!" cries she. "It is impossible!" A little curious laugh breaks from her that is cruelly akin to a cry. "There is too much to remember!" says she, suddenly.

"You think you would be wronging *her*," says Baltimore, reading her correctly. "I have told you you are at fault there. She would bless the chance that swept me out of her life. And as for me, I should have no regrets. You need not fear that."

"Ah! That is what I *do* fear," says she, in a low tone.

"Well, you have decided," says he, after a pause. "After all, why should I feel either disappointment or surprise? What is there about me that should tempt any woman to cast in her lot with mine?"

"Much," says Lady Swansdown, deliberately. "But the one great essential is wanting. You have no love to give. It is all given." She leans towards him and regards him earnestly. "Do you really think you are in love with me? Shall I tell you who you *are* in love with?" She lets her soft cheek fall into her hand and looks up at him from under her long lashes.

"You can tell me what you will," says he, a little impatiently.

"Listen then," says she, with a rather broken attempt at

gaiety. "You are in love with that good, charming, irritating, impossible, but most lovable person in the world—your own wife!"

"Pshaw!" says Baltimore, with an irritable gesture. "We will not discuss her, if you please."

"As you will. To discuss her or leave her name out of it altogether will not, however, alter matters."

"You have quite made up your mind?" asks he, presently, looking at her searchingly. "You will let me go alone into exile?"

"You will not go," returns she, trying to speak with conviction, but looking very anxious.

"I certainly shall. There is nothing else left for me to do. Life here is intolerable."

"There is one thing," says she, her voice trembling. "You might make it up with her."

"Do you think I haven't tried," says he, with a harsh laugh. "I'm tired of making advances. I have done all that man can do. No; I shall not try again. My one regret in leaving England will be that I shall not see you again!"

"Don't!" says she, hoarsely.

"I believe, in my soul," says he, hurriedly, "that you *do* care for me. That it is only because of *her* that you will not listen to me."

"You are right. I"—in a low tone—"I—." Her voice fails her. She presses her hands tightly together. "I confess," says she, with terrible abandonment, "that I might have listened to you, had I not liked *her* so well."

"Better than me, apparently," says he, bitterly. "She has had the best of it all through."

"There we are quits then," says she, quite as bitterly. "Because you like her better than me."

"If so, do you think I would speak to you as I have spoken?"

"Yes, I think that. A man is always more or less of a baby. Years of discretion he seldom reaches. You are angry with your wife and would be revenged upon her, and your way to revenge yourself is to make a *second* woman hate you."

"A second?"

"I should probably hate you in six months," says she with a touch of passion. "I am not sure that I do not hate you now."

Her nerve is fast failing her. If she had had a doubt about it before, the certainty now that Baltimore's feeling for her is merely friendship—the desire of a lonely man for some sympathetic companion—*anything* but love—has entered into her and crushed her. He would devote the rest of his life to her. She is sure of that, but always it would be a life filled with an unavailing regret. A horror of the whole situation has seized upon her. She will *never* be anything more to him than a pleasant memory, whilst he to her must be an ever-growing pain. Oh, to be able to wrench herself free—to be able to forget him and blot him out of her mind for ever.

"A *second* woman!" repeats he, as if struck by this thought to the exclusion of all others.

"Yes."

"You think, then," gazing at her, "that *she* hates me?"

Lady Swansdown breaks into a low but mirthless laugh. The most poignant anguish rings through it.

"She—*she*!" cries she, as if unable to control herself, and then stops suddenly, placing her hand on her forehead. "Oh, no, *she* doesn't hate you," she says. "But how you betray yourself! Do you wonder I laugh? Did ever *any* man so give himself away? You have been declaring to me for months that she hates you, yet when *I* put it into words, or you think I do, it seems as though some fresh new evil had befallen you. Ah, give up this *rôle* of Don Juan, Baltimore. It doesn't suit you."

"I have had no desire to play the part," says he with a frown.

"No? And yet you ask a woman, for whom you scarcely bear a passing affection, to run away with you—to defy public opinion for your sake, and so forth. You would advise her to count the world well lost for love—*such* love as yours! You pour every bit of the old rubbish into one's ears, and yet—" she stops abruptly. A very storm of anger and grief and despair is shaking her to her heart's core.

"Well?" says he, still frowning.

"What have you to offer me in exchange for all you ask me to give up? A heart filled with thoughts of another! No more! . . . .

'If you persist in thinking——"

"Why should I *not* think it? When I tell you there is danger

of my hating you, as your wife might perhaps hate you—your first thought is for her! ‘ You think, then, that she hates me?’ ” (she imitates the anxiety of his tone with angry truthfulness). “ Not one word of horror at the thought that *I* might hate you six months hence.”

“ Perhaps I did not believe you would,” says he with some embarrassment.

“ Ah, that is so like a man! You think, don’t you, that you were made to be loved. There, *go* . . . Leave me . . . ”

He would have spoken to her again, but she rejects the idea with such bitterness that he is necessarily silent. She has covered her face with her hands . . . . Presently she is alone.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

“ But there are griefs, ay, griefs as deep:  
The friendship turned to hate,  
And deeper still, and deeper still  
Repentance come too late, too late ! ”

JOYCE, on the whole, had not enjoyed last night’s dance at The Court. Barbara had been there, and she had gone home with her and Monkton after it, and on waking this morning a sense of unreality, of dissatisfaction, is all that comes to her. No pleasant flavour is on her mental palate, there is only a vague feeling of failure and a dislike to looking into things—to analyse matters as they stand.

Yet where the failure came in she would have found it difficult to explain even to herself. Everybody, so far as she was concerned, had behaved perfectly, that is, as she—if she had been compelled to say it *out loud*—would have desired them to behave. Mr. Beauclerk had been polite enough, not *too* polite, and Lady Baltimore had made a great deal of her, and Barbara had said she looked lovely, and Freddy had said something—oh, absurd, of course, and not worth repeating, but still flattering—and those men from the barracks at Clonbree had been a perfect nuisance, they were so pressing with their kind attentions, and so eager to get a dance, and Mr. Dysart—

Well, that fault could not be laid to *his* charge; therefore, of course, he was all that could be desired. *He* was circumspect to the last degree. *He* had not been pressing with his attentions.

He had indeed been *so* kind and nice that he had only asked her for one dance, and during the short quarter of an hour that that took to get through he had been so admirably conducted as to restrain his conversation to the most commonplace, and had not suggested that the conservatory was a capital place to get cool in between the dances.

The comb—she was doing her hair at the time—caught in her hair as she came to this point, and she flung it angrily from her, and assured herself that the tears that had suddenly come into her eyes arose from the pain that that hateful instrument of torture had caused her.

Yes—Felix had taken the right course. He had at last learned that she could never be anything to him—could never forgive him. It showed great dignity in him, great strength of mind. She had told him—at least, given him to understand—when in London, that he should forget her, and he *had* forgotten. He had obeyed her. The comb must have hurt her again, and worse *this* time, because now the tears are running down her cheeks. How horrible it is to be unforgiving. People who don't forgive *never* go to Heaven. There seems to be some sort of vicious consolation in this thought.

In truth, Dysart's behaviour to her since his return had been all she had led him to understand it *ought* to be. He is so changed towards her in every way, that sometimes she has wondered if he has forgotten all the strange, unhappy past, and is now entirely emancipated from the torture of love unrequited that once had been his.

It is a train of thought she has up to this shrank from pursuing, yet which (she being strong in certain ways) should have been pursued by her, to the bitter end. One small fact, however, had rendered her doubtful. She could not fail to notice that whenever he and she were together, in morning-room, ball-room, or at luncheon or dinner, or breakfast, though he will not approach or voluntarily address her, unless she first makes an advance towards him—a rare occurrence—still, if she raises her eyes to his—anywhere, at any moment—it is to find *his* on her.

And what *sad* eyes! Searching, longing, despairing, angry, but always full of an indescribable tenderness.

Last night she had specially noticed this, but then last night

he had specially held aloof from her. No, no. It was no use dwelling upon it. He would not forgive. That chapter in her life was closed. To attempt to open it again would be to court defeat.

Joyce, however, had not been the only one to whom last night had been a disappointment. Beauclerk's determination to propose to her, to put his fortune to the touch, and so gain hers, failed. Either the fates were against him, or else she herself was in a wilful mood. She had refused to leave the dancing room with him on any pretext whatsoever, unless to gain the coolness of the crowded hall outside, or the still more inhabited supper-room.

He was not dismayed, however. And there was no need to do things precipitately. There was plenty of time. There could be *no* doubt about the fact that she preferred him to any of the other men of her acquaintance. He had discovered that she had refused Dysart not only once, but twice. This he had drawn out of Isabel by a mild and apparently meaningless, but nevertheless incessant and abstruse, cross-examination. Naturally! He could see at once the reason for that. No girl who had been once honoured by *his* attentions could possibly give her heart to another. No girl ever yet refused an honest offer unless her mind was filled with the image of another fellow. Mr. Beauclerk found no difficulty about placing "the other fellow" in this case. Norman Beauclerk was *his* name! What woman in her senses would prefer that tiresome Dysart—with his "downright honesty" business so gloomily developed—to him—Beauclerk? Answer: not one.

Well, she shall be rewarded now, *dear* little girl. He will make her happy for life by laying his name and—prospective—fortune at her feet! To-day he will end his happy bachelor state, and sacrifice himself on the altar of love.

Thus resolved, he walks up through the lands of The Court through the valley filled with opening fronds of ferns, and through the spinney beyond that again, until he comes to where the Monktons live. The house seems very silent; knocking at the door, the maid comes to tell him that Mr. and Mrs. Monkton and the children are out, but that Miss Kavanagh is within.

Happy circumstance. Surely the fates favour him. They

always *have*, by-the-bye, sure sign that he is deserving of good luck.

Thanks. Miss Kavanagh then. His compliments, and hopes that she is not too fatigued to receive him.

The maid having shown him into the drawing-room retires with the message, and presently the sound of little high-heeled shoes crossing the hall tells him that Joyce is approaching. His heart beats high—not immoderately high—to be uncertain is to be more or less unnerved, but there is no uncertainty about his wooing. Still, it pleases him to know that in spite of her fatigue she could not bring herself to deny herself to *him*.

"Ah! How *good* of you," says he as she enters, meeting her with both hands outstretched. "I feared the visit was too early! A very *bêtise* on my part! But you are the soul of kindness always."

"*Early!*" says Joyce, with a little laugh. "Why you might have found me chasing the children round the garden three hours ago. Providentially," giving him one hand, the ordinary one, and ignoring his other, "their father and mother were bound to go to Lisdown this afternoon and took them with them or I should have been dead long before this."

"Ah!" says Beauclerk, and then with increasing tenderness. "So glad they were removed. It would have been too much for you, wouldn't it?"

"Yes—I daresay—though on the whole I don't believe I mind them," says Miss Kavanagh. "Well, and what about last night, it was delightful, wasn't it?"

Secretly she sighs heavily, as she makes this most untruthful assertion.

"Ah! *was* it?" asks he. "I did not find it so. How could I, when you were so unkind to me?"

"I—oh no. Oh, surely not!" says she anxiously. There is no touch of the coquetry that might have been about this answer had it been given to a man better liked. A slow soft colour has crept into her cheeks, born of the knowledge that she had got out of several dances with him, but he, seeing it, gives it another—a more flattering meaning to his own self-love.

"Can you deny it?" asks he, changing his seat so as to get nearer to her. "Joyce," he leans towards her, "may I speak at last? Last night I was foiled in my purpose. It is difficult to

say all that is in one's heart at a public affair of that kind, but now—now——”

Miss Kavanagh has sprung to her feet.

“No. Don't, *don't!*” she says earnestly. “I tell you—I beg you. I warn you——” she pauses as if not knowing what else to say, and raises her pretty hands as if to enforce her words.

“Shy, delightfully shy!” says Mr. Beauclerk to himself. He goes quickly up to her with all the noble air of the conqueror, and seizing one of the trembling hands holds it in his own.

“Hear me,” he says with an amused toleration of her girlish *mauvaise honte*. “It is only such a little thing I have to say to you, but yet it means a great deal to *me*—and to you, I hope. I love you, Joyce, I have come here to-day to ask you to be my wife.”

“I *told* you not to speak,” says she. She has grown very white now. “I warned you. It is no use—no use indeed.”

“I have startled you,” says Beauclerk, still disbelieving, yet somehow loosening the clasp on her hand. “You did not expect, perhaps, that I should have spoken to-day, and yet——”

“No, it was not that,” says Miss Kavanagh slowly. “I knew you would speak—I thought last night would have been the time, but I managed to avoid it then, and now——”

“Well?”

“I thought it better to get it over,” says she gently. She stops as if struck by something, and heavy tears rush to her eyes. Ah! she had told another very much the same as that. But she had not meant it then, and yet had been believed; now, when she does mean it, she is not believed! Oh, if the cases might be reversed!

Beauclerk, however, mistakes the cause of the tears.

“It—get what over?” demands he, smiling.

“This misunderstanding.”

“Ah, yes, *that*. I am afraid,” he leans more closely towards her, “I have *often* been afraid that you have not quite read me as I ought to be read.”

“Oh, I have read you,” says she, with a little gesture of her head, half confused, half mournful.

“But not rightly, perhaps. There have been moments when I fear you may have misjudged me.”

“Not one,” says she quickly. “Mr. Beauclerk, if I might *implore* you not to say another word.”

"Only one more," pleads he, coming up smiling as usual. "Just one. Joyce, let me say my last word; it may make all the difference in the world between you and me now. I love you——Nay hear me!" she has risen, and he, rising too, takes possession of both her hands, "I have come here to-day to ask you to be my wife; you know that already, but you do *not* know how I have worshipped you all these dreary months, and how I have kept silent—for your sake."

"And for '*my sake*,' why do you speak now?" asks she. She has withdrawn her hands from his. "What have you to offer me now that you had not a year ago?"

After all it is a great thing to be an accomplished liar. It sticks to Beauclerk now.

"Why! Haven't you *heard*?" asks he, lifting astonished brows.

"I have heard nothing!"

"Not of my coming appointment?"—modestly. "At least of my chance of it?"

"No. Nothing—nothing. And even if I had it would make no difference. I beg you to understand once for all, Mr. Beauclerk, that I cannot listen to you."

"Not now perhaps. I have been very sudden—but——"

"No. Never. Never!"

"Are you telling me that you refuse me?" asks he, looking at her with a rather strange expression in his eyes.

"I am sorry you put it that way," returns she faintly.

"I don't believe you know what you are doing," cries he, losing his self-control for once in his life. "You will repent this! For a moment of spite, of ill-temper, you——"

"Why should I be ill-tempered about anything that concerns you and me?" says she—very gently still. She has grown even whiter, however, and has lifted her head so that her large eyes are directed straight to his. Something in the calm severity of her look chills him.

"Ah! *you* know best," says he viciously. The game is up—is thoroughly played out. This he acknowledges to himself, and the knowledge does not help to sweeten his temper. It helps him, however, to direct a last shaft at her. Taking up his hat he makes a movement to depart, and then looks back at her. His overweening vanity is still alive.

"When you *do* regret it," says he, "and I believe that will be

soon—it will be too late ! You had the goodness to give me a warning a few minutes ago. I give you one now."

"I shall not regret it," returns she coldly.

"Not even when Dysart has sailed for India, and 'the girl he left behind him' is disconsolate ?" asks he with an insolent laugh.  
"Hah ! *That* touches you !"

It *has* touched her. She looks like a living thing stricken suddenly into marble, as she stands gazing back at him, with her hands tightly clenched before her. India ! To India ! And she had never heard.

Extreme anger, however, fights with her grief, and overcoming it, enables her to answer her adversary.

"I think you too will feel regret," says she gravely. "When you look back upon your conduct to me to-day."

There is such gentleness, such dignity in her rebuke, and her beautiful face is so full of a mute reproach, that all the good there is in Beauclerk rises to the surface. He flings his hat upon a table near, and himself at her feet.

"Forgive me !" cries he in a stifled tone. "Have mercy on me, Joyce ! I love you—I swear it ! Do not cast me adrift ! All I have said or done I regret now ! You *said* I should regret and I do."

Something in his abasement disgusts the girl, instead of creating pity in her breast. She shakes herself free of him by a sharp and horrified movement.

"You must go home," she says calmly, yet with a frowning brow. "And you must not come here again. I *told* you it was all useless, but you would not listen. No—no—not a word !" He has risen to his feet, and would have advanced towards her, but she waves him from her with a sort of troubled hatred in her face.

"You mean—" begins he hoarsely.

"One thing—one thing only," feverishly. "That I hope I shall *never see you again !*"

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

"When a man hath once forfeited the reputation of his integrity, he is set fast, and nothing will then serve his turn, neither truth nor falsehood."

WHEN he is gone Joyce draws a deep breath. For a moment it seems to her that it is all over—a disagreeable task performed ; and then suddenly a reaction sets in. The scene gone through has tried her more than she knows, and now, without warning, she finds she is crying bitterly.

How *horrible* it all had been. How detestable he had looked—not so much when offering her his hand—(as for his heart, pah!)—as when he had given way to his weak exhibition of feeling, and had knelt at her feet, throwing himself on her mercy. She places her hands over her eyes when she thinks of that. Oh ! she *wishes* he hadn't done it !

She is still crying softly—not now for Beauclerk's unpleasant behaviour, but for certain past beliefs—when a knock at the door warns her that another visitor is coming.

She has not had time or sufficient presence of mind to tell a servant that she is not at home, when Miss Maliphant is ushered in by the parlour-maid.

"I thought I'd come down and have a chat with you about last night," she begins in her usual loud tones, and with an assumption of easiness that is belied by the keen and searching glance she directs at Joyce.

"I'm so glad," says Joyce, telling her little lie as bravely as she can, whilst trying to conceal her red eyelids from Miss Maliphant's astute gaze, by pretending to rearrange a cushion that has fallen from one of the lounges.

"Are you ?" says her visitor drily. " Seems to me I've come at the wrong moment. Shall I go away ? "

"Go ! No," says Joyce, reddening and frowning a little "Why should you ?"

"Well, you've been crying," says Miss Maliphant in her terribly downright way. "I *hate* people when I've been crying. But then it makes me a fright, and it only makes you a little less pretty. I suppose I mustn't ask what it is all about ? "

"If you did, I don't believe I could tell you," says Joyce, laughing rather unsteadily. "I was merely thinking, and it is the simplest thing in the world to feel silly now and then."

"Thinking? Of Mr. Beauclerk?" asks Miss Maliphant promptly and without the slightest idea of hesitation. "I saw him leaving this, as I came by the upper road. Was it he who made you cry?"

"Certainly not," says Joyce indignantly.

"It looks like it, however," says the other, her masculine voice growing even sterner. "What was he saying to you?"

"I really *do* think—" Joyce is beginning coldly, when Miss Maliphant stops her by an imperative gesture.

"Oh, I know. I know *all* about that," says she, contumuously. "One shouldn't ask questions about other people's affairs. I've *learned* my manners, though I seldom make any use of my knowledge, I admit. After all I see no reason why I *shouldn't* ask you that question. I want to know, and there is no one to tell me but you. Was he proposing to you? Eh?"

"Why should you think that?" says Joyce, subdued by the masterful manner of the other, and by something honest and above-board about her that is her chief characteristic. There is no suspicion either about her, of her questions being prompted by mere idle curiosity. She had said she wanted to know, and there was meaning in her tone.

"Why shouldn't I?" says she now. "He comes down here early this afternoon. He goes away in haste, and I find you in tears. Everything points the one way."

"I don't see why it should point in *that* direction."

"Come, be open with me," says the heiress brusquely, in an abrupt fashion that still fails to offend. "Did he propose to you?"

Joyce hesitates. She raises her head and looks at Miss Maliphant earnestly. What a *good* face she has—if plain. Too good to be made unhappy. After all, why not tell her the truth? It would be a warning. It is impossible to be blind to the fact that Miss Maliphant had been glad to receive the dishonest attentions paid her every now and then by Beauclerk. Those attentions would probably be increased now, and would end but one way. He would get Miss Maliphant's money, and *she*—that good, kind-hearted girl—what would *she* get? It seems cruel

to be silent, and yet to speak is difficult. Would it be fair or honourable to divulge his secret?

Would it be fair or honourable to let *her* imagine what is not true. He had been false to her—Joyce (she could not hide from herself the knowledge that with all his affected desire for her, he would never have made her an offer of his hand, but for her having fallen in for that money)—he would therefore be false to Miss Maliphant. He would marry her, undoubtedly, and as a husband, he would break her heart. Is she, for the sake of a word or two, to see her fall a prey to a mere passionless fortune-hunter? A thousand times no! Better inflict a little pain now, rather than let the girl endure endless pain in the future.

With a shrinking at her heart, born of the fear that the word will be very bitter to her guest, she says:

"Yes," distinctly.

"Hah!" says Miss Maliphant, and that is all. Joyce, regarding her anxiously, is as relieved as astonished to see no trace of grief or chagrin upon her face. There is no change at all, indeed, except that she looks deeply reflective. Her mind seems to be travelling backwards, picking up loose threads of memory, no doubt, and joining them together. A sense of intense comfort fills Joyce's soul. After all, the wound had not gone deep. She had been right to speak.

"He is not worth thinking about," says she tremulously, *apropos* of nothing as it seems.

"No?" says Miss Maliphant. "Then what were you crying about?"

"I hardly know. I felt nervous, and once I *did* like him—not *very* much—but still, I liked him; and he was a disappointment."

"Tell you what," says Miss Maliphant. "You've hit upon a big truth. He is *not* worth thinking about. Once, perhaps, I, too, liked him, and I was an idiot for my pains; but I sha'n't like him again in a hurry. I expect I've got to let him know *that*, one way or another. And, as for you——"

"I tell you I never liked him *much*," says Joyce, with a touch of displeasure. "He was handsome, suave, agreeable, but——"

"He *was*, and *is*, a hypocrite!" interrupts Miss Maliphant, with truly beautiful conciseness. (She has never learned to

mince matters. "And when all is told, perhaps nothing better than a fool. You are well out of it, in my opinion."

"I don't think I had much to do with it," says Joyce, unable to refrain from a smile. "I fancy my poor uncle was responsible for the honour done me to day." Then a sort of vague feeling that she is being ungenerous distresses her. "Perhaps, after all, I misjudge him too far," she says.

"*Could you?*" with a bitter little laugh.

"I don't know," doubtfully. "One often forms an opinion of a person, and though the ground-work of it may be just, still one is too inclined to build upon it, and to rear stories upon it, that get a little beyond the actual truth when the structure is completed."

"Oh, I think it is *he* who tells all the stories," says Miss Maliphant, who is singularly dull in little unnecessary ways, and has failed to follow Joyce in her upstairs flight. "In my opinion he's a liar. I was going to say *pur et simple*, but he is neither pure nor simple."

"A liar!" says Joyce, as if shocked. Some old thought recurs to her. She turns quickly to Miss Maliphant. The thought grows into words almost before she is aware of it.

"Have you a cousin in India?" asks she.

"In India?" Miss Maliphant regards her with some surprise. Why this sudden absurd question in the middle of an interesting conversation about that "Judas." I regret to say this is what Miss Maliphant has now decided upon naming Mr. Beauclerk when talking to herself.

"Yes; India."

"Not one. Plenty in Manchester and Birmingham, but not one in India."

Joyce leans back in her chair and a strange laugh breaks from her. She gets up suddenly, and goes to the other, and leans over her, as though the better to see her.

"Oh think, *think*," says she. "Not a cousin you loved? *Dearly* loved? A cousin for whom you were breaking your heart? Who was not as steady as he ought to be, but who——"

"You must be going out of your mind," says Miss Maliphant, drawing back from her. "If you saw my Birmingham cousins, or even the Manchester ones, you wouldn't ask that question twice. They think of nothing but money, money, money, from

morning till night, and are essentially shoppy. I don't mind saying it, you know. It is as good to give up and acknowledge things, and certainly they——”

“Never mind them. It is the Indian cousin in whom I am interested,” says Joyce impatiently. “You are sure, *sure* that you haven't one out there? One whom Mr. Beauclerk knew about, and who was in love with you, and you with him? The cousin he told me of.”

“Mr. Beauclerk?”

“Yes, yes. You remember the night of the ball at The Court, last autumn. I saw you with Mr. Beauclerk in the gardens then, and he told me afterwards, you had been confiding in him about your cousin. The one in India. That you were going to be married to him. Oh! there *must* be truth—*some* truth in it. Do *try* to think!”

“If,” says Miss Maliphant slowly, “I were to think until I was black in the face—as black as any Indian of 'em all—I couldn't, even by so severe a process, conjure up a cousin in Hindostan. And so he told you that?”

“Yes,” says Joyce faintly. She feels almost physically ill.

“He's positively unique!” says Miss Maliphant after a slight pause. “I told you just now that he was a liar, but I didn't throw sufficient enthusiasm into the assertion. He is a liar of distinction; very far above his fellows. I suppose it would be superfluous now to ask if, that night you speak of, you were engaged to Mr. Dysart?”

“Oh no,” says Joyce quickly, as if struck. “There never has been, there never *will* be anything of that sort between me and Mr. Dysart. Surely Mr. Beauclerk did not——”

“Oh, yes, he did! He assured me—not in so many words (let me be perfectly just to him), but he positively gave me to understand that you were going to marry Felix Dysart. There, don't mind that,” seeing the girl's pained face, “he was bound to say *something*, you know, though it must be confessed, the Indian cousin's story was the more ingenious. Why didn't you tell me of that before?”

“Because he told it to me in the strictest confidence.”

“Of course. Bound you on your honour not to speak of it, lest my feelings should be hurt. Really, do you know, I think he was almost clever enough to make one sorry he didn't

succeed. Well, good-bye." She rises abruptly, and taking Joyce's hand looks at her for a moment. "Felix Dysart has a good heart," says she suddenly. As suddenly she kisses Joyce, and crossing the room with a quick stride, leaves it.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

"Shall we not laugh, shall we not weep?"

IT is quite four o'clock and therefore two hours later. Barbara has returned and has learned the secret of Joyce's pale looks and sad eyes, and is now standing on the hearthrug, looking as one might who has been suddenly wakened from a dream that had seemed only too real.

"And you mean to say—you *really* mean, Joyce, that you refused him."

"Yes. I actually had that much common sense," with a laugh that has something of bitterness in it.

"But I thought—I was sure——"

"I know. You thought he was my ideal of all things admirable. And you thought wrong."

"But if not he——"

"*Barbara!*" says Joyce sharply. "Is it not enough that you should have made *one* mistake? Must you insist on making another?"

"Well, never mind," says Mrs. Monkton hastily, "I'm glad I made *that* one at all events. And I'm only sorry you have felt it your duty to make your pretty eyes wet about it. Good gracious," looking out of the window, "who is coming now? Dicky Browne and Mr. Courtenay, and those detestable Blakes. Tommy," turning sharply to her first-born, "if you and Mabel stay here, you must be *good*. Do you hear, now, *good!* You are not to ask a single question, or touch a thing in the room, and you are to keep Mabel quiet. I am not going to have Mrs. Blake go home and say you are the worst behaved children she ever met in her life. You will stay, Joyce?" anxiously to her sister.

"Oh, I suppose so. I couldn't leave you to endure their tender mercies alone."

"That's a darling girl. You know I never *can* get on with

that odious woman——! Ah! how d'ye do, Mrs. Blake? How sweet of you to come and see me to-day, after last night's fatigue."

"Well, I think a drive a capital thing after being up all night," says the new comer, a fat, little, ill-natured woman, nestling herself into the cosiest chair in the room. "I hadn't *quite* meant to come here, but I met Mr. Browne and Mr. Courtenay, so I thought we might as well join forces, and storm you in good earnest. Mr. Browne has just been telling me that Lady Swansdown left The Court this morning. Got a telegram, she said, summoning her to Gloucestershire. Never *do* believe in those sudden telegrams myself. Stayed rather long in that ante-room with Lord Baltimore last night, I fancy."

"I didn't know she had been in any ante-room," says Mrs. Monkton coldly. "I daresay her mother-in-law is ill again. She has always been very attentive to her."

"Not on terms with her son, you know, so Lady Swansdown hopes by the attention you speak of, to come in for the old lady's private fortune. Very considerable fortune I've been told."

"Who told you?" asks Mr. Browne with a cruelly lively curiosity. "Lady Swansdown?"

"Oh, dear no!"

Pause. Dicky still looking expectant, and Mrs. Blake uncomfortable. She is raking her brain to try and find some reasonable person who *might* have told her, but her brain fails her.

The pause threatens to be ghastly, when Tommy comes unconsciously to the rescue.

He had been told off, as we know, to keep Mabel in a proper frame of mind, but, being in a militant mood, has resented the task appointed him. He has, indeed, so far given in to the powers that be, that he has consented to accept a picture-book, and to show it to Mabel, who is looking at it with him, lost in admiration of its remarkable powers of description. Each picture, indeed, is graphically explained by Tommy at the top of his lungs, and in extreme bad humour.

He is lying on the rug on his fat stomach, and is becoming quite a martinet.

"Look at this!" he is saying now. "Look, do you hear? or

I won't stay and keep you good any longer. Here's a picture about a boat that is going to be drowned down in the sea, all in one minnit. The name of it is," reading, laboriously, "All Hands to the Pump." And," with considerable vicious enjoyment, "it isn't a bit of good for them either. Here," pointing at the picture again with a stout little forefinger, "here they're all 'handsing' at the pump ! See?"

"No, I don't, and I don't *want* to," says Mabel, whimpering, and hiding her eyes. "Oh! I don't *like* it ! It's a *horrid* picture ! What's that man down there in the corner," peeping through her fingers at a dead man in the foreground. "He's dead ! I *know* he is !"

"Of course he is," says Tommy. "And," valiantly, "I don't care a bit, I don't."

"Oh ! but I do," says Mabel. "And there's a lot of water, isn't there ?"

"There always is in the sea," says Tommy.

"They'll *all* be drowned, I know they will," says Mabel, pushing away the book. "Oh ! I *hate* 'handsing.' Turn over, Tommy, *do* ! It's a nasty, cruel, wicked picture !"

"Tommy, don't frighten Mabel," says his mother anxiously.

"I'm not frightening her. I'm only keeping her quiet," says Tommy defiantly.

"Hah, hah !" says Mr. Courtenay vacuously.

"How wonderfully unpleasant children *can* make themselves !" says Mrs. Blake, making herself 'wonderfully unpleasant' on the spot. "Your little boy so reminds me of my Reginald. He pulls his sister's hair merely for the fun of hearing her squeal !"

"Tommy does not pull Mabel's hair," says Barbara, a little stiffly. "Tommy, come here and talk to Mr. Browne, he wants to speak to you."

"I want to know if you would like a cat?" says Mr. Browne, drawing Tommy on to his knee.

"I don't want a cat like *our* cat," says Tommy promptly. "Ours is so small, and her tail is too thin. Lady Baltimore has a nice cat, with a tail like mama's fury for her neck."

"Well, that's the very sort of cat I can get you if you wish."

"But is the cat as big as her tail ?" asks Tommy, still careful not to commit himself.

"Well, perhaps not quite," says Mr. Browne, gravely. "Must it be quite as big?"

"I hate small cats," says Tommy, "I want a big one! I want——" pausing to find a suitable simile and happily remembering the kennel outside, "a regular *setter* of a cat!"

"Ah!" says Mr. Browne. "I expect I shall have to telegraph to India for a tiger for you!"

"A real live Tiger?" asks Tommy, with distended eyes and a flutter of wild joy at his heart, the keener that some fear is mingled with it. "A Tiger that eats people up?"

"A man-eater," says Mr. Browne solemnly. "It would be the nearest approach I know to the animal you have described. As you won't have the cat that Lady Baltimore will give you, you must only try to put up with mine."

"Poor Lady Baltimore!" lisps Mrs. Blake affectedly. "What a great deal she has to endure."

"Oh! she's all right to-day," returns Mr. Browne cheerfully. "Toothache any amount better this morning!"

Mrs. Blake laughs in a little mincing way.

"How *droll* you are," says she. "Ah! if it were only *toothache* that was the matter. But——" silence—very effective—and a profound sigh.

"Toothache's good enough for me," says Dicky. "I should never dream of asking for more." He glances here at Joyce, and continues *sotto voce*. "You look as if you had got it!"

"No," returns she innocently. "*Mine* is neuralgia. A rather worse thing perhaps after all."

"Yes. You can get the tooth out," says he.

"Have you heard?" asks Mrs. Blake, "that Mr. Beauclerk is going to marry that *hideous* Miss Maliphant. Horrid Manchester person, don't you know! Can't think what Lady Baltimore sees in her, except," with a giggle, "her want of beauty. Got rather too much of pretty women I should say."

"I'm really afraid that somebody has been hoaxing you this time, Mrs. Blake," says Dicky genially. "I happen to know for a fact that Miss Maliphant is not going to marry Beauclerk."

"Indeed!" snappishly. "Ah! well really he is to be congratulated, I think. Perhaps," with a sharp glance at Joyce, "I mistook the name of the young lady; I certainly heard he was going to be married."

"So am I," says Mr. Browne, "some time or other. We are all going to get married one day or another. One day, indeed, is as good as another. You have set us such a capital example that we're eager to follow it."

Mr. and Mrs. Blake being a notoriously unhappy couple, the latter grows rather red here, and Joyce gives Dicky a reproachful glance, which he returns with one of the wildest bewilderment. What can she mean?

"Mr. Dysart will be a distinct loss when he goes to India," continues Mrs. Blake quickly. "Won't be back for years I hear; and leaving so soon too. A disappointment I'm told! Some obdurate fair one! Sort of chest affection, don't you know, ha! ha! India's the place for that sort of thing. Knock it out of him in no time. Thought he looked rather down in the mouth last night. Not up to much lately, it has struck me. Seen much of him this time, Miss Kavanagh?"

"Yes. A good deal," says Joyce, who has, however, paled perceptibly.

"Thought him rather gone to seed, eh? Rather the worse for wear?"

"I think him always very agreeable," says Joyce icily.

A second most uncomfortable silence ensues. Barbara tries to get up a conversation with Mr. Courtenay, but that person, never very brilliant at any time, seems now stricken with dumbness. Into this awkward abyss Mabel plunges this time. Evidently she had been dwelling secretly on Tommy's comments on their own cat, and is therefore full of thought about that interesting animal.

"Our cat is going to have chickens!" says she, with all the air of one who is imparting exciting intelligence.

This astounding piece of natural history is received with varied emotions by the listeners. Mr. Browne, however, is unfeignedly charmed with it, and grows as enthusiastic about it as even Mabel can desire.

"You don't say so! When? Where?" demands he with breathless eagerness.

"Don't know," says Mabel seriously. "Last time 'twas in nurse's best bonnet, but," raising a sweet, angelic little face to his. "She says she'll be *blowed* if she has them there *this* time!"

"Mabel!" cries her mother, crimson with mortification.

"Yes?" asks Mabel sweetly.

But it is too much for everyone. Even Mrs. Blake gives way for once to honest mirth, and under cover of the laughter rises and takes her departure, rather glad of the excuse to get away. She carries off Mr. Courtenay in her train.

Dicky having lingered a little while to see that Mabel isn't scolded, goes too, and Barbara, with a sense of relief, turns to Joyce.

"You look so awfully tired," says she. "Why don't you go and lie down."

"I thought, on the contrary, I should like to go out for a walk," says Joyce indifferently. "I confess my head is aching horribly. And that woman only made me worse."

"What a woman! I wonder she told so many lies. I wonder if—"

"If Mr. Dysart is going to India," supplies Joyce calmly. "Very likely. Why not? Most men in the army go to India one time or another."

"True!" says Mrs. Monkton with a sigh. Then in a low tone, "I shall be very sorry for him."

"Why? If he goes," coldly, "it is by his own desire only. I see nothing to be sorry about."

"Oh! I do," says Barbara; and then—"Well, go out, dearest. I daresay the air *will* do you good."

## CHAPTER L.

"Tis with our judgments as our watches, none  
Go just alike, yet each believes his own."

LORD BALTIMORE had not spoken in a mere fit of pique when he told Lady Swansdown of his fixed intention of putting a term to his present life. His last interview with his wife had quite decided him to throw up everything, and seek forgetfulness in travel. Inclination had pointed towards such countries as Africa, or the Northern parts of America, as, being a keen sportsman, he believed there he might find an occupation that would distract his mind from the thoughts that now jarred upon him incessantly.

His asking Lady Swansdown to accompany him, therefore, had been a sudden determination. To go on a lengthened

shooting expedition by oneself is one thing, to go with a woman delicately nurtured is another. Of course, had she agreed to his proposal, all his plans must necessarily have been altered—and perhaps his second feeling after her refusal to go with him was one of unmistakeable relief. His proposal to her had certainly been born of pique!

The next morning found him, however, still strong in his desire for change. The desire was even so far stronger that he now burned to put it into execution—to get away to some fresh sphere of action, and deliberately set himself to obliterate from his memory all past ties and recollections.

There was too perhaps a touch of revenge that bordered upon pleasure as he thought of what his wife would say when she heard of his decision. She, who shrank so delicately from gossip of all kinds, could not fail to be distressed by news that must inevitably leave her and her private affairs open to public criticism. Though everybody was perpetually guessing about her domestic relations with her husband, no one as a matter of fact knew (except indeed two) quite the real truth about them. This would effectually open the eyes of Society and proclaim to everybody that, though she had refused to demand a separation, still she had been obliged to accept it. This would touch her! If in no other way could he get at her proud spirit, here, now, he would triumph. She had been anxious to get rid of him—in a respectable way of course—but Death, as usual, had declined to step in when most wanted, and now—well! she must accept her release in however disreputable a guise it comes.

It is just at the moment when Mrs. Blake is holding forth on Lady Baltimore's affairs to Mrs. Monkton that Baltimore enters the smaller drawing-room, where he knows he will be sure to meet his wife at this hour.

It is far into the afternoon, but still the spring sunshine is streaming through the windows. Lady Baltimore, in a heavy tea-gown of pale-green plush, is sitting by the fire reading a book—her little son upon the hearth-rug beside her. The place is strewn with bricks, and the boy, as his father enters, looks up at him, and calls to him eagerly to come and help him. At the sound of the child's quick, glad voice, a pang contracts Baltimore's heart. The child. He had forgotten him.

"I can't make this castle," says Bertie, "and mother isn't a

bit of good ; hers always fall down. Come you, and make me one."

"Not now," says Baltimore. "Not to-day. Run away to your nurse—I want to speak to your mother."

There is something abrupt and jerky in his manner—something strained, and with sufficient temper in it to make the child cease from entreaty. The very pain Baltimore is feeling has made his manner harsher to the child. Yet as the latter passes him obediently, he seizes the small figure in his arms and presses him convulsively to his breast ; then, putting him down, he points silently but peremptorily to the door.

"Well ?" says Lady Baltimore. She has risen—startled by his abrupt entrance, his tone, and more than all by that last brief but passionate burst of affection towards the child. "You wish to speak to me—again ?"

"There won't be many more opportunities," says he grimly ; "you may safely give me a few moments to-day. I bring you good news. I am going abroad. At once. For ever."

In spite of the terrible self-control she has taught herself, Lady Baltimore's self-possession gives way. Her brain seems to reel. Instinctively she grasps hold of the back of the tall *prie-Dieu* next to her.

"Hah ! I thought so. I have touched her at last—through her pride," thinks Baltimore, watching her with a savage satisfaction that yet, however, hurts him horribly. And after all he was wrong too. He had touched her indeed ; but it was her heart, not her pride he had wounded.

"Abroad !" echoes she faintly.

"Yes. Why not ? I am sick of this sort of life. I have decided on flinging it up."

"Since when have you come to this decision ?" asks she presently, having conquered her sudden weakness by a supreme effort.

"If you want day and date, I'm afraid I shan't be able to supply you. It has been growing upon me for some time—the idea of it, I mean ; and last night—you brought it to perfection."

"I ?"

"Have you already forgotten all the complimentary speeches you made me ? They "with a sardonic smile, "are so sweet to me that I shall keep them ripe in my memory until death overtakes

me—and *after* it, I think! You told me amongst many other wisely things—if my mind does not deceive me—that you wished me well out of your life, and Lady Swansdown with me."

"That is a direct and most malicious misapplication of my words," says she emphatically.

"Is it? I confess that was *my* reading of them. I accepted that version, and thinking to do you a good turn and relieve you of both your *bêtes noires* at once, I proposed to Lady Swansdown last night that she should accompany me upon my endless travels!"

There is a long, long pause, during which Lady Baltimore's face seems to have grown into marble. She takes a step forward now. Through the stern pallor of her skin her large eyes seem to gleam like fire.

"How dare you?" she says in a voice very low, but so intense that it rings through the room. "How *dare* you tell me of this? Are you lost to *all* shame? You and she to go—to go away together; it is only what I have been anticipating for months. I could see how it was with you! But that you should have the insolence to stand before me," she grows almost magnificent in her wrath, "and *declare* your infamy aloud—such a thought was beyond me. There was a time when I would have thought it beyond even *you*!"

"Was there?" says he.

He laughs aloud.

"There, there, there!" says she, with a rather wild sort of sigh. "Why should I waste a single emotion upon you? Let me take you calmly, casually. Come, come now!" It is the saddest thing in the world to see how she treads down the passionate—most natural—uprisings within her against the injustice of life. "Make me at least *au courant* with your movements; you and she will go—where?"

"To the Devil! you hope, don't you?" says he. "Well, you will be disappointed so far as *she* is concerned. Wherever I may be going, it appears she doesn't think it worth her while to accompany me there or anywhere else."

"You mean—that she—refused to go with you?"

"In the very baldest language, I assure you; it left nothing to be desired, believe me, in the matter of lucidity. No, she would not go with me; you see, there is not only one, but *two*

women in the world who regard me as being utterly without charm."

"I commiserate you," says she with a bitter sneer. "If, after all your attention to her, your friend has proved faithless, I——"

"Don't waste your pity," says he, interrupting her rather rudely. "On the whole, the decision of 'my friend,' as you call her, was rather a relief to me than otherwise. I felt it my duty to deprive *you* of her society"—with an unpleasant laugh—"and so I asked her to come with me. When she declined to accompany me, she left me free to devote myself to sport."

"Ah! you refuse to be comforted!" says she, contemptuously.

"Think what you will," says he, restraining himself with determination. "It doesn't matter in the least to me now. . . . your opinion I consider worthless — because prejudiced—as worthless as you consider me. I came here simply to tell you of my determination to go abroad."

"You have told me of that already. Lady Swansdown having failed you, may I ask"—with studied contempt—"who you are going to take with you *now*?"

"What do you mean?" says he, wheeling round to her. "What do you mean by that? By Heavens!" laying his hands upon her shoulders, and looking with fierce eyes into her pale face, "a man might well *kill* you!"

"And why?" demands she, undaunted. "You would have taken *her*—you have confessed so much—you had the coarse courage to put it into words—if not her, why"—with a shrug—"then another!"

"There! think as you will," says he, releasing her roughly. "*Nothing* I could say would convince or move you. And yet—I know it is no use, but I am determined I will leave nothing unsaid. I will give you no loophole. I asked her to go with me in a moment of irritation—of loneliness, if you will. It is hard for a man to be for ever outside the pale of affection, and I thought—well, it is no matter *what* I thought. I was wrong, it seems. As for caring for her, I care so little that now I feel actually *glad* she had the sense to refuse my senseless proposal. She would have bored me, I think, and I should undoubtedly have bored *her*. The proposition was made to her in a moment of folly!"

"Oh, *folly!* " says she, with a curious laugh.

"Well, give it any other name you like. And, after all"—in a low tone—"you are right. It was *not* the word. If I had said *despair* I should have been nearer the mark."

"There might even be another word," says she, slowly.

"Even if there were," says he, "the occasion for it is of your making. You have thrown me over. You must be prepared, therefore, to accept the consequences."

"You have prepared me for anything," says she, calmly, but with bitter meaning.

"See here," says he, furiously. "There may still be one thing left for which I have *not* prepared you. You have asked me who I am going to take with me when I leave this place for ever. Shall I answer you?"

Something in his manner terrifies her. She feels her face blanching. Words are denied her, but she makes a faint movement of assent with her hand.

What is he going to say?

"What if I should decide, then, on taking *my son* with me?" says he, violently. "Who is there to prevent me? Not you, or another. Thus I could cut *all* ties, and put you out of my life at once and for ever."

He had certainly not calculated on the force of his words—his manner. It had been a mere angry suggestion. There was no cruelty in Baltimore's nature. He had never once permitted himself to dwell upon the possibility of separating the boy from his mother. Such terrible revenge as that was beyond him. His whole nature would have revolted from it. He had spoken with passion—urged by her contempt into a desire to show her where his power lay—without any intention of actually using it. He meant, perhaps, to weaken her intolerable defiance, and show her where a hole in her armour lay. He was not prepared for the effect of his words.

An ashen shade has overspread her face. Her expression has become ghastly. As though her limbs have suddenly given way under her, she falls against the mantelpiece and clings to it with trembling fingers. Her eyes, wild and anguished, seek his.

"The child!" gasps she, in a voice of mortal terror. "The child! Not the child! Oh, Baltimore, you have taken *all* from me except that! *Leave me my child!*"

"Good Heavens ! Don't look at me like that !" exclaims he, inexpressibly shocked. This sudden and complete abandonment of her to her fear has horrified him. "I never meant it ; I but suggested a possibility. The child shall stay with you—do you hear me, Isabel ? The child is *yours* ! When I go, I go alone ! "

There is a moment's silence, and then she bursts into tears. It is a sharp reaction, and it shakes her bodily and mentally. A wild return of her love for him shakes her—that first sweet and only love of her life)—born of intense gratitude. But sadly, slowly, it dies away again. It seems to her too late to dream of *that* again. Yet, perhaps, her tears have as much to do with that lost love as with her gratitude.

Slowly her colour returns. She checks her sobs. She raises her head and looks at him still with her handkerchief pressed to her tremulous lips.

"It is a promise?" says she.

"Yes, a promise."

"You will not change again?"—nervously—"you——"

"Ah ! doubt to the last," says he. "It is a promise from me to you ; and, of course, the word of such a reprobate as you consider me can scarcely be of any avail."

"But—you *could* not break this promise?" says she, in a low voice, and with a long, *long* sigh.

"What *trust* you place in me!" says he, with an open sneer. "Well, so be it. I give you home and child. You give me—. Not worth while going into the magnificence of *your* gifts, is it ?"

"I gave you once a whole heart—an unbroken faith," says she.

"And took them back again!—Child's play," says he. "Child's promises. Well, if you will have it so, you have got a promise from me now, and I think you might say 'thank you' for it, as the children do."

"I *do* thank you," says she vehemently. "Does not my whole manner speak for me?" Once again her eyes fill with tears.

"*So* much love for the child!" cries he in a stinging tone, "and not one thought for the father. Truly your professions of love were light as thistledown. There, you are not worth a thought yourself! Expend any affection you have upon your son, and

forget me as soon as ever you can. It will not take you long, once I am out of your sight."

He strides towards the door and then looks back at her.

"You understand about my going," he says. "That it is decided, I mean?"

"As you will," says she, her glance on the ground. There is such a total lack of emotion in her whole air that it might suggest itself to an acute student of human nature that she does her very utmost to suppress even the smallest sign of it. But alas, Baltimore is not that student.

"Be just," says he sternly. "It is as *you* will, not as I. It is you who are driving me into exile."

He has turned his back and has his hand on the handle of the door in the act of opening it. At this instant she makes a movement towards him, holding out her hands, but as suddenly suppresses herself. When he turns again to say a last word, she is standing where he last saw her, pale and impassive as a statue.

"There will be some matters to arrange," says he, "before my going. I have telegraphed to Hansard" (his lawyer) "he will be down in the morning. There will be a few papers for you to sign to-morrow——"

"Papers!"

"My will and your maintenance whilst I am away, and matters that will concern the child's future."

"His future! That means——"

"That in all probability when I have started I shall never see his face again—or yours."

He opens the door abruptly and is gone.

(*To be concluded.*)

## Mrs. Charles Kean.

By EMILIA AYLMER GOWING.

THE gifted and beautiful Ellen Tree, whose maiden celebrity was blended by marriage with the still more famous name of Kean, lived her life, from youth to age, through trials and triumphs that bear a touch of romance into the story of one of the most interesting, dearest women who ever showed kindness to the young, or lent a hand to aid the strivings of honourable ambition in her own sex. Of this noble trait in her character none can speak more feelingly than I.

Her career upon the stage seems to have begun under exceptional advantages. As the younger sister of a favourite actress and singer, Maria Tree, she obtained access at an early age to the classic boards of Covent Garden, and made her first public appearance in a part requiring more authority and grip at the hands of an artiste than could be expected from a novice in her teens—Olivia, in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The charm of her youth and budding talents must have carried her bravely through the ordeal, for a brief provincial experience led her back to London, and in her twentieth year she was engaged at Drury Lane to play a wide range of leading parts, both light and serious, while yet crude, unformed, and apparently quite unequal to her singular chances. Nevertheless, she steadily held her ground with the public, giving promise of future excellence as a graceful *comédienne* and touching impersonator of the gentler heroines of tragedy or domestic drama; the depths of passion and flashes of “sacred fire” being yet beyond her undeveloped genius. “Always beautiful, never great,” was the critical judgment of her qualities, during the bright, early years of her rising fame at Drury Lane, and later, at Covent Garden.

As her talents and beauty ripened, a poet, Thomas Noon Talfourd, ultimately promoted to high honours in his legal capacity, set his hopes as a dramatist upon the popular Ellen

Tree—so we have seen more than one aspirant in our day build up a reputation with the assistance of another fascinating Ellen.

Ion, the darling child of its author's fancy, had been already performed by Macready, whose great qualities could not fit him to realize the fair Greek youth, the ideal of a maiden's dream of devoted love and heroic sacrifice. Serjeant Talfourd made earnest suit to Miss Ellen Tree, that she would undertake it.

She liked the part, but owing to the difficult language, her usual quick study failed her; she could not get the words into her head. Serjeant Talfourd lived in Russell Square; he gave her the key of that sylvan retreat in central Bloomsbury, and for six weeks she spent hours each day walking up and down the "green baize" of Nature's spreading, beneath the forest trees, and round and round the circling garden-paths of the square, studying Ion persistently. A great hit at Covent Garden was the result, and the after consequence, a starring engagement for America.

Mr. Price, the chief *entrepreneur* of that day, secured Miss Ellen Tree, and forthwith wrote across the Atlantic in a style cutely calculated to put his patrons on their mettle. He was "afraid Americans could not appreciate so refined an actress," and so forth. Americans proved they could do so, and the classic Ion was one of Ellen Tree's chief triumphs. The scholarly, somewhat stilted lines flowed from her lips with the warmth and feeling of life, while the power and grandeur of Greek imagination lifted her above the common passions of the modern stage. After many years, her auditors, grown old, long remembered her attitude, her very tone, the effect she made upon them, with the words, "Was not that thunder?"

Her beauty as the Greek boy was a vision of life-long memory; the clear-cut features, the faultless head, bound after the model of an Apollo, the tunic to the knee, showing the fine turn of foot and limb, became the part beyond expression, and in those days her charms passed into a proverb; they were recorded by many a pen, notably by Sir Archibald Alison in his History of England.

She returned home dowered with £11,000, a great sum in those days, for a year or two of effort. That such a combina-

tion of beauty, talent, and money should have passed the sixth lustre in the unruffled peace of maidenhood reads like a paradox. Pure as one of Shakespeare's poetic daughters, whom she realized so well, she could reflect their feelings through her own, as her young lover grew into her heart, through an acquaintance of long years.

Charles Kean saw and admired the fair Ellen Tree, as a young man fresh from Eton. Called, through his father's premature failure, to give up military ambition, and turn bread-winner for his mother upon the stage, he was thrown in contact with the brilliant actress on many occasions, and specially at that dread crisis of his life, when his father, Edmund Kean, played for the last time, at Covent Garden, his marvellous Othello—as a wreck of his old greatness ; that fatal night, in the middle of a speech too exacting for his wasted powers, Kean fell fainting into his son's arms, and passed quickly from the scene of life. That night, Charles Kean was the Iago, and the Desdemona, Ellen Tree. Need we say more ?

Years went on. Young Kean fought his way up against hard opposition, and became the frequent partner, on starring tours, of the ideal artiste of his early admiration. Time had levelled the difference, in talent as well as in age, between the youth and the lovely woman—Ellen was his senior by four years—and the nameless attraction of their common art drew them together day by day. And so, "they made themselves a pair of stairs to marriage"—more happily than some others of their calling, whose petty social ambitions led to a repudiation of Nature's gifts.

They were married in Dublin, the bride being given away by one of Wellington's officers, General Sir George D'Aguilar.

On this occasion each had to fulfil fixed engagements, and go on a separate tour after their union. Their next meeting was at the country home of Sir Henry and Lady Blackwood, who invited the married lovers to complete their interrupted honeymoon in Hampshire. Afterwards they always acted together, playing Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Ophelia, and such like parts, with a fervour and reality that charmed their audiences.

The Queen, in those early years of her reign and marriage, distinguished them by singular favour. When the memorable

Windsor performances were decided on, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean received the royal commands to organize the first series. They played Hamlet and Ophelia, Shylock and Portia, followed by many other favourite parts, during a succession of years at the Castle. They appeared before the Queen and Prince Consort seated in deep attention under a raised dais, close in front of the temporary stage in the Rubens room, with the little Prince of Wales and his young sisters placed upon the steps at their royal parents' feet, to take their first ideas of the play in the highest school. Here an audience "fit though few," did duty for the multitude, and the appreciative silence of the hushed chamber of presence gave a keener stimulus than applause to artists ever in sympathetic touch with the spectators they moved to mirth or tears.

In 1850 they entered into management at the Princess's in conjunction with another celebrated couple, Mr. and Mrs. Keelcy, whose talents afforded a strong contrast to their own. The opening piece was *Twelfth Night*; Mrs. Kean, then in the zenith of her powers, as Viola, silenced criticism and took success by storm with the grace and gaiety, nature and passion of her art. During the same season, she presented a new and delightful Rosalind to the admiration of the playgoing world.

The Kean management was above all memorable for the series of Shakespearian revivals, produced year after year with increasing magnificence, and excelling all that the public had hitherto known. The late Mr. George Godwin, F. R. S., for many years editor of the *Builder* assisted Mr. Kean's classic scholarship with his technical skill in archæology; neither cost nor labour were stinted, and the effects produced, according to all who remember them, have not yet been surpassed upon our contemporary stage. To the completeness and perfect keeping of these wonderful scenic pictures, Mrs. Kean lent valuable aid, ever putting her heart into her husband's work with true taste and untiring industry. Never did she let her own personality as an actress compete with the general success, taking each part as it came, the smallest as well as the greatest, so that her popular name was always available to strengthen the cast. Among her great characters were Constance in *King John*, Lady Macbeth, and Hermione in *A Winter's Tale*. Her grasp of these, according to the best judges of the day, was complete

and satisfying beyond what was expected of one already famed for the feminine gifts of tenderness and soft sympathy : the voice, eloquent with tears, proved equal to the fiercest gusts of passion, the wildest flights of rage and frenzy, as well as to the subdued force of intense acting, where the artist's reserve of power expresses more than mere violence of tone and action can ever convey. It may here be noted that Mrs. Kean produced one of the most telling effects in *Richard the Second*, in the brief parting scene between the discrowned monarch and his heart-broken Queen, by the mere power and charm of her acting, after the public was sated with the splendours of the preceding scenes, of, perhaps, the most imposing of all Charles Kean's revivals.

Up to 1854, strength and physique supported the true helpmate and zealous artist through her long course of ceaseless activity ; then her health gave way, and a year and a half of enforced retirement marked a new departure in her professional life. Thus long, her personal gifts retained so much of their grace and attraction that she could satisfy the eye no less than the ear and intelligence, even as the youthful Ophelia or Desdemona. Upon her recovery, with undiminished means, her figure and style had assumed a more matronly dignity, and henceforward she wisely preferred such characters as fitted a great actress, rather than those which must considerably depend upon a semblance of youth. To fill the juvenile parts, she trained quite a galaxy of beautiful *debutantes*, and a gifted child, Ellen Terry, was first presented to the public as Mamilius, Hermione's little son, in *A Winter's Tale*.

Mrs. Kean made her reappearance as Queen Katherine in *Henry the Eighth*, one of the highest triumphs of her art. To the wonderful power and truth of her death scene we have heard unwilling witness borne by a well-known dramatic author, who hated Shakespeare in his heart, and loved to empty the vials of his wrath upon the unvalued bard's interpreters. "I had to rush out of the theatre," said the captious one, "I couldn't bear it—'twas just like my mother's death."

In the last great revival, *Henry the Fifth*, Mrs. Kean impersonated the Chorus, with her wonted enthusiasm and fire. This closed the Keans' management, at the end of the season of 1859. High honours, but moderate profits, had been their

reward, and they prudently sought wider fields to carve their fortunes, while still able to encounter the strain and stress of travelling through Australia, America and round the world.

After an extended tour in the British Isles, they sailed for Melbourne: colonial recognition fixed their place, artistic and social, in the front rank of famed citizens of the world, and their tour through Australia and its dependencies was a success in every sense. A comic incident marked their visit to Vancouver's Island, where the small community and temperate climate furnished occupation but to a solitary chimney sweep. This sole functionary of his craft put up a notice: "The public are informed that no chimneys will be swept during the Kean festival."

It was at Sydney that Charles Kean's labours were interrupted by a first attack of the disease which shortened his life. For two months he was laid up, eliciting universal sympathy. The Governor, Sir John Young and his lady, showed unremitting kindness, and invalid delicacies were daily sent down from Government House.

Mr. Kean apparently recovered, and being due at California within a limit of time, found that the few ships which regularly undertook the voyage had already gone for that season, so that he was obliged to charter a vessel. The best that could be had was the *Fanny Smale*, a sailing ship of 380 tons, with a stout hull and steady old captain, whose experience, however, had been so far limited to coasting round the East Indian and Coromandel shores, where he had persistently plodded on beaten lines with his old-fashioned craft for some twenty years, and was now bound upon his first long ocean voyage with Charles Kean and his party.

They were seventy-four days at sea, and, as I have heard from the widow's own lips, his death was surely hastened by the hardships of that time; he was never quite the same afterwards. Every arrangement seems to have gone wrong with the seafarers. The bargain was signed for a crew of fifteen men, only eight came aboard; the ship was furnished with defective ropes that broke on trial before sailing. Captains King and Fremantle—since admirals—saw them off, with many qualms of apprehension for their safety, but said nothing of this at the time. A provision of sheep, and a goat for milk were embarked,

but no straw ; the hay intended for their keep was foolishly wasted as litter by a boy, and when this was gone, the animals had to be killed, and thus the passengers had to depend on tinned meats. Then water ran low, they were put upon an allowance, eked out with bottled ale, and rain caught in sails, basins, &c, by the usual nautical expedients. Captain Smale kept up a stout heart in his stout old hull ; both were reliable. The captain, a total abstainer, with his cool head and calm judgment, carried his ship through a succession of perils and difficulties, when gear and tackle too often failed. One night in mid-ocean, the moon did not rise till eleven, all was darkness in a tremendous sea, but without positive danger, the ship going "at a spanking rate :" the mate was in charge, the captain, Mrs. Kean, Messrs. Everett and Cathcart, were playing whist in the small stern saloon, where the married couple usually slept, while the rest of the party had tiny cabins opening out of it. In one of these, Mr. Kean and his wife's niece, Miss Patty Chapman (Mrs. F. M. Paget) were engaged at chess. A cry on deck aroused them all. "Light ahead !" They dashed out, every soul, and saw a magnificent light, some distance off, coming down towards them—they had no signals on board, no light at the masthead, only the old green and red lamps at the ship's stern. The captain sang out "Give me a torch." A rope was fixed on a long stick and lighted to hoist as a signal, but the wind blew it wild in sparks amongst the sails, and extinguished it almost immediately. Then the captain called for the red lamp by the stern ; this was held up on a pole. "In a few minutes," said an eye-witness, Miss Patty Chapman, "the strange ship came down and passed us, grazing our stern ; she was a big ship, and we could have heard a pin drop, as we watched her passing—then a sigh of relief rose at once from sailors and every one of us on board ; the captain told us, had she run into us, we must have gone down, and not a soul could have been saved, the night was so dark, and a high sea running."

Again they were caught in a fierce gale, and in the ship's struggles, the binnacle lamp fell down, and crashed through the glass into the stern cabin. The man at the wheel called out, "For God's sake give me a light, I can't tell where I'm steering." There was no second lamp provided, and the mate

brought a candle in a tin candlestick. Mrs. Kean seized it, and with Mr. George Everett's help, held it up under the protecting skylight, close to the compass, for the helmsman to steer. Then she tore a wire out of her large sun-hat, and they contrived between them to wire up the candlestick, amidst the tossing and knocking of the ship, and enabled the course to be kept that night.

Through California their world-wide tour led them to New York, a few days before the assassination of President Lincoln. In the Southern States, they witnessed the desolation of a conquered people, the charred fields swept by recent war. This was their second visit to America together, after an interval of many years. Their tour was like a triumphant progress ; to the kindness and hospitality shown them we can only find a parallel in Mr. and Mrs. Kendal's recent experience of America.

Their independence and comfort were fully secured. "He was too generous to be very rich," Mrs. Kean would proudly say of her husband, "money does not make happiness, but it can prevent a great deal of misery." And to this noble use they both devoted a large portion of their well-earned wealth. They never gave up their art, until death parted them. In harness to the last, Charles Kean suddenly broke down in January, 1868, while not yet old in years. For his widow, life was done, although she could still exert herself for others. Five and twenty years of union with the man she loved were her long spell of earthly happiness ; her pride and ambition were centred in her husband. As one instance of her self-effacement, it was observed by her fellow artists how she used to bend and sway her figure while standing near him on the stage, to give him the advantage of height. In reality, he was slightly the taller, but naturally her stately carriage added to her apparent stature. Through the long trials of her public life, their confidence in each other was never disturbed by a shade of jealousy ; her purity defied the breath of slander, while her sense of her own worth, and absolute trust in her husband, prompted her to accept all favours shown to him as benefits to herself.

It was some years afterwards that I had the happiness of knowing as a friend the artist I had so long admired with a child's wonder and a girl's enthusiasm. My opportunities of

seeing the Keans had been chiefly in Brighton, one of their favourite starring resorts, and several of their impersonations were indelibly fixed on my mind. As Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Emilia in *Othello*, I can recall her power and charm in many passages. As Mrs. Beverley, when she was slowly drawn away from her husband's body, her turn, her look, her cry, her burst of hysterical passion, can never be forgotten. *The Wife's Secret* showed them both together at their best, the wife's agony when the husband's hand is raised to take her brother's life, her shrieks, "It is my brother, my brother," piercing through his shouts of jealous fury, the marvellous climax which was said to have decided the success of the play, were literally photographed upon my memory. We used to talk over these past sensations, and Mrs. Kean would most kindly strengthen my recollections with counsels and guidance invaluable to a student of the dramatic art.

She left us in the summer of 1850. She rests well, with the husband of her youth. Shall we look upon a fairer, truer womanhood? genius united in her with a winning grace to make virtue amiable; so that if to see her was to admire, to know her was to love.

## Paul the Trespasser.

A SKETCH IN TWO PARTS.

By EVA M. HENRY.

"Love is love only when it is the sacrifice of one's self.

. . . And only in such love do we find happiness, the reward of love."

COUNT TOLSTOI, *Life*.

### PART I.

#### CHAPTER I.

THERE is not a lovelier scene in all lovely Devon than that which greeted Paul Wentworth when he emerged from the belt of wind-clipt oaks, through which led the upward path, upon the treeless summit of one of the low hills overlooking the village of Lee on its western side.

Inland, the country unrolled itself in a wide panorama of gentle hills and winding valleys, some of the hill-sides chequered green and gold where pasture land alternated with fields of ripening corn; others, like the one he had ascended, were thickly wooded with oak; others again, especially those nearest the coast, were purple with gorse, amongst which furze and brambles grew in tangled patches, giving to the surface a wild and rugged aspect.

The sea, of which only a portion was visible, owing to the curves in the coastline, gave no hint of the fury of the waves that sometimes beat on the rock-fretted shores of the far west. On its mirror-like surface the light clouds flitting by overhead cast fantastic purple-tinted shadows.

Away beneath, in the valley, at the head of a little "mouth" or bay, the village nestled among its orchards and fuchsia hedges. From two or three of its houses faint curls of smoke ascended slowly, almost imperceptibly, as though, like wraiths of earthly toil, they would fain haunt the dwellings of the workaday world whence they had sprung. An occasional sparkle of silver marked the course of a streamlet that pursued

its way side by side with the path that led from the village across a couple of fields to the beach.

Over the upland on the further side of this valley a diaphanous golden veil of sun-tinted mist was suspended, giving an idea of indistinctness and unreality to hills and fields. Something of this unreality seemed to communicate itself to Paul. Life and its reality faded away, as it were, and in its place there was only an infinite sense of well being. It was the subtle communion between the soul of Nature and the human soul, for in Nature there is no knowledge of good and evil, the knowledge that was and is the human curse.

In this mental *dolce far niente*, Paul flung himself upon the soft turf and looked vaguely down the vista of leafage that rolled away below him. Presently he was startled out of his dreamy abstraction by the consciousness of human presence.

He rose to his feet hastily and turning round stood face to face with a little boy, whose whole attitude expressed unmistakeable displeasure and disdain. The two stared at each other in silence for a few seconds, Paul somehow feeling embarrassed and just a little irritated by the child's presence. The child was the first to break the silence.

"You're a trespasser," he said solemnly, taking off his man o' war hat as he spoke. He was a well-mannered little lad and even in his anger he did not forget to be polite.

"Am I? I'm very sorry," and Paul laughed.

His frivolity offended the child's sense of dignity. He thrust his little hands deep into his pockets and gave his fair curly head a backward toss.

"Yes you are," he said authoritatively. "This is mother's land and there are boards put up. Which way did you come?"

"Along that path," replied Paul.

"Then you must have passed the board what Job the carpenter put up with 'Trespassers prosecuted' on it. Prosecuted means put in gaol," he added consolingly.

"Very likely I did pass it, but I didn't see it," said Paul, much amused at the hint of imprisonment.

"That is unfort'net. That hill is mother's too, and that, and that, and those, and those," explained the child, indicating half the country round with a comprehensive gesture. "There are

boards on all those 'cos they're mother's. They'll be mine some day when I'm big enough, Jack says."

"Who is Jack?" asked Paul, not from curiosity, but because he wished to draw the child out.

"Jack is the boy what looks after my pony. Jack's got a pony too, but it isn't his, it's mother's."

Paul laughed out loud at this paradox concerning possession. Then he asked another question.

"Do you think your mother will prosecute me for coming here?"

"I don't know."

"Will you when the hill is yours?"

"Yes."

Paul laughed again.

"Well, really that is too hard on a fellow," he exclaimed.

The juvenile despot answered not a word. Perceiving a black snail on the ground, he went down on one knee and began to tickle it with a blade of grass.

"You ought to prosecute that snail," suggested Paul. The despot disdained to reply to such a foolish suggestion. "What is your name?" asked Paul.

"Bertie Berisor of Lee." There was a touch of unconscious arrogance in the child's answer that was not lost on his questioner.

"Have you any brothers and sisters?"

Bertie shook his curly head and bent more closely over the snail.

"Have you a papa?"

"I once had one, mother says, but he's dead and—and I'm not to talk about him, please."

"Oh!" exclaimed Paul, wondering why the child was forbidden to speak of his dead father.

"How old are you, Bertie?"

"I'm six. I'll be seven soon and mother is going to give me a pony cart for my birthday." Here Bertie rose to his feet, forgetting the snail in the interest of the new topic. "A real pony cart, not a toy one, you know. It's going to have my name on it like the way mother has hers on her letters. I forget what you call it—not spread out it won't be, but all together."

"A monogram," suggested Paul.

"Yes, a monogram, that's what mother said. I'm going to learn to drive, and when I'm big enough I'll go out alone. I'll take mother often though—oftener than anybody else."

"Are you very fond of your mother?"

"Yes, I love her better'n anybody and she loves me better'n anybody."

The lowing of some cattle in the valley below reminded Paul that the afternoon must be advancing.

"Hullo!" he said, looking at his watch, "nearly six o'clock. I must be off, my little man, and perhaps you'll show me the nearest way down to the village."

"I must be off, too," answered Bertie, with childish importance. "My tea is at six," and he set off down the hill at a brisk pace, taking a different path from the one by which Paul had ascended. When they reached the bottom of the slope, a large white house came in sight.

"That's our house," explained Bertie.

A few yards further along they came to a small gateway.

"It's time for my tea. G'bye," and Bertie seized his hat with both hands and dragged it off with due politeness.

"I say, Bertie," Paul called after him, as he turned in at the gate, "ask your mother not to prosecute me."

"I'll tell her and see what she says," was the cautious answer.  
"You see there was a board up."

"Yes. I'm dreadfully sorry, you know. Tell her that, too. Good-bye."

"G'bye."

"What a rum little chap that was to be sure," mused Paul as he took his way along the village road. "As pretty as a cherub, but a regular young tyrant! Possession is nine points of his law. Berisor he said his name was, and the greater part of the country round here belongs to his mother. Hm! I wonder if this lane will take me back to Ilfracombe?" and he stopped as he came to a lane leading off the main road. He heard the sound of footsteps approaching, but, as the lane, like all Devonshire lanes, was not straight, swerving round within a few feet of its commencement, he could not see the individual to whom they belonged.

"I'll ask this person, whoever it may be," he thought. When the figure came in sight, however, he remained silent. "This

person" proved to be a woman and a beautiful woman, though wherein her beauty lay he had not time to notice. He imagined he had seen her before; there was an expression on her face that seemed familiar to him, and she must have recognised him too, for she started visibly, as she caught sight of him standing at the end of the lane. He looked after her when she had passed and tried in vain to recall her identity. When she had gone a short distance, she went towards the gateway that belonged to the large white house.

"Of course!" Paul exclaimed. "It's the child she is like. She must be the mother."

There and then he passed a mental resolution that the neighbourhood of Lee was interesting and that it would be worth another visit. He had intended crossing to the Welsh shores on the following day, but in accordance with his first resolution he was obliged to pass a second postponing his departure.

When Bertie Berisor came down to dessert that evening he told his mother of his encounter.

"There's been a trespasser, mother, on the hill—the high one with the grass at the top. He was lying on the grass and I went up to look for acorns."

"My darling!" exclaimed Mrs. Berisor, her tone betraying just a shade of motherly anxiety lest her child had been in any danger from the unknown trespasser, whom, from Bertie's mention of him, she very naturally supposed to be of the tramp order.

"He said he didn't see the board Job put up last week," continued Bertie.

"Did you speak to him? Did you tell him he was trespassing?"

"Of course, mother, and——"

"You shouldn't, darling, you shouldn't have spoken to him. You should have run straight home."

There flashed through the mother's mind wild stories of children who had wandered alone having been carried off by gipsies.

"What was he like?" she inquired anxiously.

Bertie pondered deeply for a moment, so as to recall some distinctive features in the trespasser's appearance.

"He wasn't like James," he remarked vaguely, a comparison

suggested by the fact that the footman was in the act of helping him to a fig. The train of his thoughts led him to compare the trespasser with others of his male acquaintances.

"He wasn't like James, nor like Job, not a bit, nor Jack, nor Doctor Cary, nor—nor—he wasn't as old as Doctor Cary—he was dressed in white," he added, with sudden flash of memory; "Not all in white," he corrected, "but with white trousers and a dark jacket."

"Flannels perhaps" thought Mrs. Berisor. "Was he not a poor man then, Bertie?"

"Oh, no," was the decided answer.

Mrs. Berisor breathed freely and felt inclined to laugh at her own groundless fear of a minute ago.

"He wasn't poor at all; he had a watch, he was a gentleman." Bertie was quick to recognise class distinction. "He told me to ask you if you would prosecute him for going on the hill."

"How did he know it was my land?"

"I told him. Will you put him in gaol, mother?"

Mrs. Berisor laughed merrily at the idea of imprisoning this unknown gentleman in flannels.

"No, darling, I won't put him in gaol," she replied.

"But why not, mother, when there's a board up?"

"He didn't see it you say; besides he was not doing any harm, was he?"

"N—no, only he was there, that's all."

## CHAPTER II.

ON the following morning Bertie went out for a ride on his pony, and as Jack, who always accompanied him, had gone into Ilfracombe on an errand, Mrs. Berisor walked by the side and held the leading rein, which gave her no small amount of exertion, since every now and then, in spite of expostulation, Bertie would strike into a canter and she had to run till she was almost breathless. During one of these runs she unluckily struck her foot against a loose stone in the rough road, and being unable to balance herself owing to the pace, she fell, still holding the leading rein, so that she was dragged along for several feet, Bertie neither recognising the necessity, nor having

the strength to pull up quickly. When she tried to rise she was unable to repress a sharp cry of pain.

"I have hurt my foot, Bertie, I think. I can't move it or get up."

Bertie had got out of the stirrups and had managed to scramble or rather to tumble off the pony, for he landed on the ground in a heap ; he picked himself up in a twinkling, however, and ran to his mother's side.

"Take my hand, mother dear, and I'll pull ever so hard."

Mrs. Berisor smiled as she thought how futile such an effort would be.

"It's no use, darling, I can't move. You must run home for somebody."

There was a sudden rustling in the hedge close by, and a crackling of branches, and the figure of a man appeared struggling with brambles and thorns. The next instant he had leaped to the road, apparently none the worse for his tussle.

"It's the trespasser !" exclaimed Bertie, and in the stranger Mrs. Berisor recognised the man she had passed at the foot of the lane on the previous day.

An idea of the extraordinary appearance she must present, half-sitting, half lying, as she was, in the middle of the road, came into her mind, and, forgetful of her former attempt, she once more tried to rise and once more the terrible pain in her foot made her sink down helplessly.

"Let me assist you. I'm afraid you are hurt," said the stranger.

"I'm afraid I am—a little," she replied simply, looking up at him. "Thank you," and she took the hand he held out. In a second his strong arms had raised her to a standing position. She laughed a little at her own helplessness.

"I—I don't think I can put my foot down. I must have got a sprain."

"If you could get across to that bank at the side of the road, you could rest there while I go for help."

"It is easier said than done. I can't walk a step. Look there !"

He looked down at the helpless foot in its neat shoe and silk stocking and thinking how pretty it was, he let his gaze rest on it longer than was necessary. She noticed this and blushed a

little at the recollection that she had actually told this handsome stranger to look at her foot.

"I will lift you," he said, and he caught her up as if she had been a child, and carried her over to the roadside bank.

"Thank you," she murmured, but without looking at him. "It was so stupid of me to fall like that," she added, thinking that she ought to explain how she came into such a plight, "I stumbled against a stone when I was running with the pony, and—"

"I know; I saw how it happened," put in Paul, and she did not finish her explanation. "And now," he went on, "I am going to your house to fetch assistance. I shall not be long." Before she could reply, he was running rapidly down the road towards the big white house.

"Mother," said Bertie suddenly, "you never told him you aren't going to prosecute him."

"You can tell him that, Bertie," she answered, somewhat absently.

"No," said Bertie, half to himself, "I won't. He shouldn't have come on your ground."

Mrs. Berisor did not hear this declaration of continued hostility; her foot was becoming more and more painful and she felt a little faint.

In an incredibly short time, Paul Wentworth returned with a couple of servants. They had brought with them, at Paul's suggestion, a wicker arm chair in which to carry Mrs. Berisor to the house, and Paul himself took one side of it all the way back. During the transit, Mrs. Berisor did not speak, being in great pain, and when the little procession reached the house, Paul deemed it best to take his leave immediately.

Outside, on the public road he had a right, nay, it was almost obligatory on him, to render what assistance he could; now Mrs. Berisor was in her own house, among her own people and, utter stranger that he was, his right ceased on the threshold.

"I trust the injury is, after all, but a slight one," he said, in a tone of formality, "and that you will not suffer from its consequences. Good morning. Good-bye, my little man," to Bertie, on account of their previous acquaintanceship, he held out his hand.

Bertie took it carelessly, with a hurried "G'bye," his attention

being entirely riveted on his mother, around whom there was quite a little crowd of anxious servants.

Paul slipped out unnoticed.

"I think you had better send for Doctor Cary," said Mrs. Berisor.

"He's been sent for, ma'am," was the answer. "The gentleman when he came for help said to send at once, and the coachman has gone on the mare."

It was just what Mrs. Berisor herself had said—a sprain. It was so severe, however, that she was obliged to keep to her own room for nearly a fortnight.

Paul Wentworth called to inquire for her on the day after the accident, but he did not even leave his card, arguing, with a logic that was unwelcome to him at the same time that he insisted on its necessity, that he had no right to thrust the fact of his existence on a woman who would have received the same aid as he had rendered from any farm labourer, had such an one happened on the scene of the accident instead of himself. The servant who opened the door to him, said that Mrs. Berisor was going on well, and that the injury had not been any more serious than would compel her to remain quiet for a time, so Paul felt he had not sufficient pretext to warrant his calling a second time.

But with an overpowering desire not to cut himself off from all connection with the accident that had brought him into contact with a woman beautiful as was Mrs. Berisor, Paul went to Dr. Cary for tidings of his patient, and finding him, like all west-country folk, friendly in manner, and easy of acquaintance, he determined not to let his opportunity slip, but forthwith to further that acquaintance. He was not long in discovering that the doctor's weakness was scenery—the scenery of his native shire, in particular ; Paul immediately became possessed of an enthusiasm for exploring North Devon. The bait took, and the doctor offered to drive the enthusiast in his gig round some of the more picturesque spots in that all-picturesque region. Within a week, aided by their common admiration for the valley of the Lyn and sundry other revelations of Nature's glories in the far west, the chance acquaintance between the doctor and Paul had ripened into friendship.

Little by little Paul Wentworth learnt something of the past

history of the woman for whose sake he still lingered in Ilfracombe. Her marriage had not been happy : it was just the old story that is repeated every day—a story which, if it has not always a bad ending, has very rarely a successful one. There was the family in difficulties and the beautiful daughter who had it in her power to bridge over those difficulties by a wealthy marriage. Constance Weston had loved her parents too well to let her own sentimental scruples stand in the way where any advantage to them was concerned.

Hugh Berisor was fifty when he married, and Constance was not quite twenty ; but great as was the dissimilarity in their ages, there lay a far wider gulf between their natures.

Before her marriage, Constance had been inclined to regard love as belonging rather to the realms of poetry and romance than as a necessity of everyday life, and she had imagined that the respect, coupled with a certain amount of gratitude, which she bore to Mr. Berisor, was all the love that was needful to make the wheels of the matrimonial chariot go smoothly. Only when it was too late did she learn that in her life there was something lacking, and in her heart a terrible sense of a void that could not be filled. She conscientiously did her duty by her husband, but she never deceived herself into thinking that her duty was the natural outcome of love. The clasp of baby fingers taught her in some measure to forget that her wifehood was one long regret ; from the hour of her child's birth, the blessed thought, that something had been sent her to love and to live for, filled her whole mind. All the pent-up, unused love of her heart burst forth and wrapped itself like a holy flame around the little child, that from that day forward was to her the very motive of her being. When, within three years of her marriage, Hugh Berisor's death released her from what had never been aught but a bond and a tie to her, she entered upon that fullest tide of human happiness that has for its head the pure joys of motherhood.

Good Dr. Cary looked upon Constance Berisor as absolute perfection in womanhood, and to Paul Wentworth, as to everyone with whom he spoke of her, he poured out his praises of her beauty and her goodness.

"She will marry again, of course," said Paul one day. By his

assertion he really meant a question concerning probabilities of which the doctor might be cognisant.

"She will never marry again." There was that in the doctor's tone which made Paul fancy his words implied some under-current of deeper meaning, but as the doctor was disinclined to pursue the subject, he had no chance of finding out what that meaning might be.

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### CHAPTER III.

MRS. BERISOR seemed to have forgotten the circumstances of her fall, for she never spoke of the stranger who came to her rescue until Dr. Cary mentioned him one morning, during one of his now almost unnecessary visits. Except that her ankle was still a little weak, she had quite recovered and was able to be out and about again. Dr. Cary had been giving her a description of a sail up the Dart, and she was a ready listener since she quite shared his opinions about the merits of Devonshire.

"By-the-way," he remarked casually, "Wentworth came with me and was delighted."

"Who is Wentworth?" asked Mrs. Berisor.

"Oh, I forgot that you did not know him. You remember he helped to bring you home on the day of your accident."

"Yes, and I have never thanked him for his kindness. He must have thought me very rude, but I was really too much hurt to think of manners or anything else. Who did you say he is, Doctor Cary?"

"Mr. Wentworth—a very nice fellow, uncommonly nice—a barrister—delighted with these parts as he ought to be; so delighted, in fact, that he has stayed three weeks instead of the few days he had intended. He called upon me to ask after you and I've seen a good deal of him. You know he wanted to see the place and he couldn't have found a better guide than myself. I have taken him to a good many spots, besides the usual show places, that he might never have found out for himself or by the help of a guide book either."

"You say he called on you to ask after me?" said Constance, musingly.

"Yes—didn't like to come to the house, I suppose."

"He came once but did not leave his card, so I have not had an opportunity of thanking him since. Will you thank him for me, Doctor Cary, or—no, perhaps I ought to write a little note, and perhaps you will give it to him. Shall you see him again?"

"Dear me, yes. I have to take him to the valley of the Lyn again. He hasn't seen half its beauties yet."

"Will you excuse me then, if I write now? It must seem so ungrateful of me. Here comes Bertie. He will entertain you. Bertie, tell Doctor Cary about the fish you caught," and Bertie and Dr. Cary, being very great friends indeed (the doctor was the earliest friend Bertie made on entering the world, for that matter) were soon deep in the mysteries of lines and bait and other fishy matters.

Meanwhile, a puzzle arose in Mrs. Berisor's mind as to how she should address this stranger. "Mrs. Berisor presents her compliments" seemed stiff to a man who had lifted her in his arms and who had run a quarter of a mile for help, whilst "Dear Mr. Wentworth" was treating him as though he were an old acquaintance, instead of a man whose name she had only just heard. "Yet what's in a name?" she asked herself, smiling. "One does not think of a person merely as Mr. So and So, but as an individual, and ignorance of name does not imply total absence of acquaintance."

So she began, "Dear Mr. Wentworth," and then she looked at the words she had written and repeated them to herself.

"No," she thought, "that won't do. It sounds like gush to write so to a man you have never seen before or since, and who really helped me because he couldn't do anything else, unless he were a boor. Anyone would have done as much."

She took another sheet of note-paper and wrote :

"Mrs. Berisor presents her compliments to Mr. Wentworth, and begs to offer him her best thanks for his kindness in rendering her timely assistance on the occasion of her accident. Mrs. Berisor would have assured him of her gratitude before this, but she has only to-day heard his name from Doctor Cary."

"Fancy writing like that to a man that talked to me and

carried me like a baby! But I suppose he'll see nothing absurd about it," and so thinking, she folded the note in half and took up the envelope to put it in.

"It sounds very stiff and formal, at least *I* think so, and—and it doesn't matter what *he* thinks," and she tossed the note aside and placed before her the sheet on which she had already written, "Dear Mr. Wentworth."

"I take the earliest opportunity," (she went on), "of offering you the thanks which I am afraid I quite forgot I owed you on the day of my accident, and I trust you will believe that ignorance of your name and whereabouts alone prevented me from assuring you of my gratitude sooner. I have learnt both from Dr. Cary this morning.

"Sincerely yours,

"CONSTANCE BERISOR."

"There, Doctor Cary!" she exclaimed, laying down her pen. "Please give that to Mr. Wentworth when you see him."

Dr. Cary gave Paul the note that evening.

"Mrs. Berisor asked me to give you this."

"Mrs. Berisor?" exclaimed Paul in astonishment.

"Yes, she wished to thank you for turning up that day."

Paul put the note into his breast-pocket without opening it.

"Thank you," he said. "Has Mrs. Berisor quite recovered?"

"A little weak about the ankle still. Able to be out again, though. I have done with her as far as that goes. Looked in for a chat this morning as I was passing. Told her about our trip up the Dart. That reminds me. Will you come to Lynton to-morrow?"

Having learnt that Mrs. Berisor had recovered sufficiently to be able to go out again, Paul had mentally resolved to pay a visit to Lee on the following day, on the chance of meeting her. There was just a possibility that that unopened note might contain some sort of an invitation to further what acquaintance he had with her. Not wishing to give Dr. Cary any hint of the truth, he replied somewhat lamely and evasively:

"Will it do if I let you have an answer in the morning—or to-night later? I—ah—cannot tell what my plans may be. I—ah—expect letters—a friend may come down from London

I will let you know as soon as possible. I should like, above all things to go to Lynton with you."

Does the recording angel write down lovers' lies and subterfuges? If so, he must have a busy time of it.

Alone in his room, Paul read Mrs. Berisor's note and was not quite sure what to make of it. She addressed him as a friend, yet it contained no encouragement to further the friendship. It was as curt as it well could be, for all its friendly beginning.

"Hang it! I wish she hadn't written like that. If she had still treated me as a complete stranger I might have managed to begin the acquaintance all over again, but she doesn't do that; neither is it the kind of note she would write to a fellow regularly enrolled among her acquaintances. I wonder what she means? Bah! nothing. Probably she wrote it without thinking anything about it."

This was not true, though that there was no particular meaning in the *way* she wrote *was* true. She wrote as a mere matter of common courtesy and politeness, and her hesitation as to the style she should adopt was due, not to sentimental reasons, but to a wish to regard duly the fitness of things.

"Well, anyhow," mused Paul, "if she meets me on the road she cannot very well pass me by, so I'll go over and tell Doctor Cary I can't go with him to Lynton to-morrow."

He didn't tell him at the same time that he meant to betake himself to Lee instead. He excused himself on the plea that he expected a friend, and managed to convey the impression that his disappointment at being deprived of his drive was great and unavoidable.

In Devonshire, as in Ireland, man proposes and the weather disposes. The next day was wet, with the downright hopelessness of a Devonshire wet day. As Paul knew very well, there was no chance of meeting Mrs. Berisor in the rain, so he remained indoors and spent his time between looking out of the windows at the dull, leaden sky and equally dull sea, and venting the vexation that grew on him, as he watched, in knocking about billiard balls in an aimless, unscientific fashion. The following day was not a whit better, indeed it seemed to him worse, for wet weather is one of the things that length of duration does not make one look upon with lessening disfavour, but just the other way. But when the third day broke wet and

cheerless as the other two he cursed Devonshire and the non-sensical hankering after a handsome woman that made him stay a day longer than he could help in a "confounded water-logged hole, dull enough to make a man cut his throat for want of something to do. By Jove! I can't stand another day of it, and I won't. Look here," he said to the Boots, "if there are any more shower-baths let loose to-morrow morning I'm off, so mind you have me up in time for the ten o'clock express."

"All right, sir. Ten-ten it leaves, sir."

"Ten-ten then, and be d——d to you."

The Boots went off blandly, wholly unmoved by these parting words. In fact, he rather liked gentlemen that swore at him. They usually made it up in tips as a sort of salve to their consciences. His *bêtes noirs* were clergymen and other professed models of morality, who always said "please" or "my good fellow" when they spoke to him, but "takes care as they never leaves their visitin' cards be'ind them." That was the eminently inoffensive way he put it.

When morning came the Boots was perplexed in his mind. "I wonder if seventy-three wants to go really. It's going to be as fine as you need wish. No, I won't get him off by the ten ten. He can stop. Fine mornin', sir," he remarked casually to "number seventy-three," as that gentleman came leisurely down the stairs at his usual hour—about the same hour at which the express was due to start.

Paul tossed him a shilling.

"That makes fifteen this mornin' already," thought the Boots, with much satisfaction, "and I aint 'ad but seven in these last three days. What a difference the weather do make to be sure!" The truth of Boots's moralising is universally apparent.

(*To be concluded.*)

### Mme. de Chevreuse.

"WE have in France three women capable of governing or of overthrowing three great Kingdoms," wrote Cardinal Mazarin in 1660, "and these are the duchesse de Longueville, the princesse Palatine, and the duchesse de Chevreuse."

It is the career of the latter that I propose to sketch briefly in these pages.

Marie de Rohan, eldest daughter of the duc de Montbazon, was born in 1600, and married at seventeen the duc de Luynes, Constable of France. It was not, however, until after her second marriage—in 1622—with Claude de Lorraine, duc de Chevreuse, a son of Henri de Guise, that she became a prominent character in history.

The duc de Chevreuse was good-looking and valiant—as became a prince of the House of Lorraine—but "sans nul ordre dans ses affaires, et bien peu édifiant dans ses mœurs," and these faults, according to the morality of the times, were deemed sufficient to condone any shortcomings in the conduct of his wife.

Mme. de Chevreuse was beautiful. All her contemporaries agree on that point. She had a ravishing figure, a charming face with large blue eyes and a quantity of light, chestnut-coloured hair. In manner she was by turns gentle and vivacious.

Immediately on being appointed *surintendante de la maison* to the queen, Anne of Austria and the duchesse became fast friends. They were about the same age; and the young queen, neglected by her husband, found pleasant distraction with her lively friend.

The Court of Louis XIII. was then a brilliant one, and gallantry the order of the day. The amusements of the queen and Marie de Rohan soon became less frivolous and assumed a serious aspect.

In 1624 the celebrated Lord Holland arrived from England

to negotiate a marriage between the King's sister, Mme. Henrietta, and the Prince of Wales (soon afterwards Charles I).

My lord of Holland was young and remarkably handsome—Rochefoucauld says, "un des plus beaux hommes du monde mais d'une beauté efféminée." He became épris with the beautiful duchesse, and the attraction appears to have been mutual. He interested her in English affairs, and from that moment may be dated her début in love and politics. At the same time commenced the well-known intrigue between the Queen and Buckingham.

Mme. de Chevreuse possessed *almost* every qualification requisite to make her a great politician, but the one lacking was enough to ruin all the rest; she did not take a just aim; or rather, she never chose one for herself. It was always chosen for her by another—and that other invariably the man she loved. Rochefoucauld accuses her of bringing misfortune to all her friends; and it is no doubt true that they were hastened to their end through the mad enterprises in which they engaged.

The Court of Monsieur (the King's brother) was a hot-bed of intrigues against Richelieu, who designated that in which Chalais was concerned "the most frightful conspiracy ever recorded in history."

Henri de Tallyrand, prince de Chalais, had an extraordinary attachment to Mme. de Chevreuse. He was accused of conspiring against the life of the King, and persuading Monsieur to break off his marriage with Mlle. de Montpensier in order that he might marry the queen as soon as he ascended the throne. Richelieu so far succeeded in convincing the King of this plot, that not only did Louis XIII. abandon Chalais as later he abandoned Cinq-Mars, but for the rest of his life he remained persuaded that the queen had a hand in the affair.

Chalais suffered on the first scaffold erected by Richelieu's commands; Monsieur escaped by wedding Mlle. de Montpensier; the queen fell into deeper disgrace than ever, while Mme. de Chevreuse—meanly denounced by the duc d' Orléans and even by Chalais himself—was ordered to quit France, because Richelieu said "elle faisait plus de mal que personne." Thus she learned to her cost what it was to love a queen too well! She wished to go to England, where she was certain of the support of Holland, of Buckingham, and of Charles I. But

this was denied her ; imprisonment was threatened, and her husband with difficulty obtained permission for her to retire to Lorraine.

Instead of arriving there as a refugee the beautiful duchesse was received with magnificent triumph. She dazzled, fascinated, and won the heart of the impetuous and adventurous Charles IV. She found him siding with Austrian interests ; she bound him to those of England. She cemented relations with Savoy, thus establishing a European league, to which she gave the support of the Protestant party, governed by her relations the Rohans and the Soubises.

The plot was serious. An English fleet conducted by Buckingham himself was to proceed to the isle of Ré and combine with the Protestants of La Rochelle ; the duc de Savoie to make a descent on Dauphiné and Provence ; the duc de Rohan at the head of the reformers to raise insurrection in Languedoc ; the duc de Lorraine to march on Paris.

The chief agent in this plot, charged with carrying orders to all concerned was Lord Montagu, a friend of Holland and of Buckingham, who also had succumbed to the charms of Mme. de Chevreuse. Richelieu, warned by his secret police, watched the movements of Montagu ; had him arrested and his papers seized ; the whole conspiracy was discovered, and the coalition, thanks to the cleverness of the Cardinal, dissolved.

England on demanding peace, named among the most pressing conditions that the beautiful exile must return to France.

Marie de Rohan reappeared at Court, and there came a few years of calm in her stormy life. She was not yet thirty, and "il était difficile de la voir impunément." Even Richelieu was not insensible to her charms. Mme. de Motteville says : "Ce ministre, malgré la rigueur qu'il avait eu pour elle, ne l'avait jamais hâte, sa beauté avait eu des charmes pour lui, etc."

But Mme. de Chevreuse preferred one of his ministers to the Cardinal. She conquered him with a look, and did so avowedly, on behalf of the queen and the malcontents. This minister was Charles de l'Aubépine, marquis de Châteauneuf, *garde des sceaux*.

Châteauneuf was fifty years of age when he conceived his fatal passion for the duchesse, and she shared to the full all the dangers and misfortunes attending it.

Richelieu was quick to perceive a change in his hitherto faithful "Keeper of the Seals."

Once, when he was ill, and believed himself at the point of death, the queen gave a ball, and Châteauneuf attended it and danced. This irritated his eminence to such a degree that shortly afterwards (1633) the Keeper of the Seals was arrested and his papers seized. Among these were fifty-two letters in the writing of Mme. de Chevreuse, which rendered the relations between Châteauneuf and the duchesse sufficiently apparent. There were also letters from the Chevalier de Jars, Lords Holland and Montagu, the duc de Vendôme and the Queen of England herself. The papers were brought to the Cardinal, who kept them ; after his death they were discovered in his private desk.

The letters from Mme. de Chevreuse show that Richelieu was jealous of Châteauneuf, and the latter alarmed by the part played by the duchesse to hoodwink the Cardinal. Here is a short specimen with the original ciphers :

" La tyrannie de 22 (Richelieu) s'augmente de momens en momens. Il peste et enrage de ce que 28 (herself) ne le va pas voir. Je lui avais écrit deux fois avec des compliments dont il est indigne, ce que je ne lui eusse jamais rendu sans la persécution que 57 (unknown) m'a faite pour cela, me disant que c'était acheter le repos. Je crois que les faveurs de 23 (the King) ont mis au dernier point sa presomption . . . 28 aime mieux se résondre à périr qu'à faire ses sousmissions à 22. Sa gloire m'est odicuse. . . . C'est 38 (Châteauneuf) veul que je veux qui sache ceci. J'estime tant le courage et l'affection de 38 que je veux qu'il sache tous les intérêts de 28. Elle se fie si entièrement en 38 qu'elle tient ses intérêts aussi chers entre ses mains qu'aux siennes. . . . Mandez-moi comment je vous pourrai voir sans que 22 le sache, car je ferrai tout ce que vous pigerez à propos pour cela souhaitant passionément de vous entretenir, et ayant bien des choses à vous dire qui ne peuvent pas bien expliquer par écrit, surtout touchant 22, l'ayant vu ce soir et trouvé plus résolu à persécuter 28 que jamais. Adieu, il faut que je vous voye à quelque prix que ce soit. Faites-moi réponse, et prenez garde à 22, car il épie 28 et 38, en qui 28 se fie comme à elle-même."

What must have been the feelings of the superb and imperious

Cardinal when he discovered how he had been played with by a woman and betrayed by a friend !

De Jars, after being thrown into the Bastille and condemned to be beheaded, received pardon as he was about to mount the scaffold. Châteauneuf was imprisoned ten years in the fortress of Angoulême ; while Mme. de Chevreuse simply received the Cardinal's orders to retire to Dampierre.

But the queen could not do without her dear friend, nor she without the queen. Many an evening in the darkening twilight Mme. de Chevreuse travelled disguised to Paris to meet the queen at the Louvre or at the convent of Val-de-Grâce, returning in the middle of the night to Dampierre.

When at last these visits were suspected the brave, faithful friend of Anne of Austria was banished to Touraine, an estate that belonged to her first husband ; and it was believed that for a time at least these intrigues of politics and love would cease.

It was but a tame kind of diversion to turn the head of the old Archbishop of Tours ! But Madame also consoled herself with the visits of the young and amiable La Rochefoucauld and the letters from the queen. She spent four long years in Touraine, occupying her energies in knitting together a mysterious correspondence between the queen, Charles IV., the Queen of England, and the King of Spain.

But the police spies of the suspicious Cardinal again discovered everything. Once more there was an inquiry, and the queen forbidden to write to Mme. de Chevreuse. "Parceque ce prétexte," said the king, "a été couverture de toutes les écritures que la reine a faites ailleurs." Clearly it was always Mme. de Chevreuse whom the king and the Cardinal considered the prime mover in evil, and they did not believe themselves sure of the queen until they had separated her from her dangerous friend. But what was to be done with this enemy to peace ? Was she to be again expelled from France ? If so, what new and unforeseen entanglements might not ensue !

The Cardinal proposed to temporise. He tried cajolery ; but the duchesse returned with interest his protestations of friendship, while in her heart she mistrusted him. He sent her money ; she took it, though only as a loan.

But a profound mistrust of the intentions of Richelieu and the

king pushed Mme. de Chevreuse to an extreme course. She preferred exiling herself this time rather than risk falling into the hands of her enemies, and she fled from Touraine to Spain, across the South of France.

Her sole confidant in this was her aged adorer, the Archbishop of Tours, Bertrand de Chaux. He had relations on the frontier, and gave her letters of credit with all necessary instructions and plans of the roads she should take; but in her hurried flight she forgot all. She set off on September 6th, 1637, in a carriage as though going for a drive; then, at nine in the evening returned disguised as a man, mounted a horse, and after riding hard for six leagues, found herself without letters, guide-book, or any of the necessaries of a journey, followed only by two grooms. She was unable to change horses all night, and next day arrived, without an hour's rest, at Ruffec, where lived La Rochefoucauld. Instead of asking him for shelter, she wrote him the following note :

" Monsieur, je suis un gentilhomme français et demande vos services pour ma liberté et peut-être pour ma vie. Je me suis malheureusement battu. J'ai tué un seigneur de marque. Cela me force de quitter France promptement, parce qu'on me cherche. Je vous crois assez généreux pour me servir sans me connaître. J'ai besoin d'un carrosse et de quelque valet pour me servir."

She received what she asked for. The carriage was a great help, she was exhausted by fatigue. She was driven to another house belonging to La Rochefoucauld, where she arrived at midnight, and leaving there the carriage and servants proceeded on horseback towards the Spanish frontier.

At night she occasionally slept on hay or straw in a barn, and had scarcely any food. Equally beautiful and seductive in male attire as she had been in her brilliant costumes of *grande dame* she met with many admirers during her adventurous ride, and is said to have made as many conquests as in the salons of the Louvre.

On one occasion she encountered a dozen horsemen commanded by the Marquis d'Antin, and had to go out of her road to avoid being recognised. Another time in a valley of the Pyrénées a gentleman who had seen her in Paris told her he would have taken her for Mme. de Chevreuse had she been

dressed in different fashion—and the handsome unknown got out of the difficulty by replying that being a relative of that lady it was natural enough to resemble her. Her courage and gaiety never for one moment abandoned her. In answer to some, she said with a mysterious air, that she was the duc d'Enghien on a secret mission from the king. At last she reached Spain, after enduring unheard-of fatigue and escaping a thousand perils. But before crossing the frontier she wrote to the gentleman whom she had met in the Pyrénées confessing that he had not been mistaken, that she was in truth Mme. de Chevreuse, and that “*ayant trouvé en lui une civilité extraordinaire, elle prenait la liberté de le prier de lui procurer des étoffes pour se vertir conformément à son sexe et à sa condition.*”

This appeal was not made in vain. She had sent all her jewels to the care of La Rochefoucauld, and entered Spain taking nothing with her but her incomparable beauty, wit and courage.

While the King and Cardinal, baffled in their attempts to track the fugitive, were seriously contemplating the advisability of politely inviting her back to France, the King of Spain was giving Mme. de Chevreuse a magnificent welcome in Madrid; and the name of Philip IV. may safely be added to the list of her conquests. He placed at her disposal carriages drawn by six horses; loaded her with marks of honour; her opinions had weight in the Cabinet-Councils of Madrid. But war breaking out between the two countries began to render the situation a little too delicate, and in 1638 she left Spain for England.

Mme. de Chevreuse was received and treated in London as she had been in Madrid. She found there her earliest lover, Lord Holland; Lord Montague and many others paid court to her. The King and Queen, charmed with her, both wrote to Louis XIII. on her behalf, which resulted in renewed negotiations between Richelieu and herself.

It is curious to see by their correspondence how, during more than a year, the cardinal and the duchess employed every manœuvre of the finest diplomacy, and exhausted their consummate cleverness in persuading each other to draw towards the common end both had in view!

At length everything seemed arranged. Mme. de Chevreuse

had said farewell to the queen of England ; a vessel was ready to take her to Dieppe, when she received a letter warning her not to return to France. This was followed by others. Private messengers also came to her, with advice to the same effect. Then heart-sick with hope deferred she wrote to her husband in these words :

" Je desire bien vivement me voir en France en état de remédier à nos affaires, et de vivre doucement avec vous et mes enfans."

But Mme. de Chevreuse did not go.

In 1641 we find her in Brussels acting as a link between England, Spain and Lorraine. Though not generally known it can be proved that she took part in the conspiracy of the Comte de Soissons against Richelieu. France and Europe were in the attempt, but it ended in the death of Soissons, and once more the Cardinal's power rose supreme.

Anne of Austria went with the times. Finding the plot miscarry she openly expressed her horror of it, and far from interceding on behalf of her old friend and favourite, begged as a particular favour that the duchess might be kept away from her person, and indeed from France.

Here then, was Mme. de Chevreuse fallen to the lowest depth of misfortune. Farther off than ever seemed the hope of revisiting her country, her beautiful castle at Dampierre, the domestic life with her children for which she had begun to long. She was at the end of her resources, and passed many months of misery with only her indomitable courage as support.

Suddenly on the 4th December, 1642, the dreaded Cardinal—victorious over all his enemies, absolute master of the king and queen—succumbed to the fiat of a higher power. Louis XIII. was not long in following him ; and, as though the shade of the Cardinal were influencing the king even on his death-bed, before expiring he added two extraordinary clauses to his will, dated 20th April. These were to the effect that Châteauneuf must be kept in prison, and Mme. de Chevreuse—whom up to the last he called *le Diable*—must remain in banishment.

A few days later the same parliament that had registered the declaration of 20th April, abolished it ; Châteauneuf came out of prison, and Mme. de Chevreuse left Brussels in triumph to return to France.

Mme. de Chevreuse was now forty-three and her beauty was beginning to wane. But she had gained political experience ; she had known the most celebrated statesmen in Europe ; she had visited almost every court.

More ambitious for her friends than for herself, she saw them already recompensed for their long services, replacing everywhere the creatures of Richelieu, and at their head as prime minister the man who had suffered in prison ten years.

The duchesse returned, believing she would re-enter the Louvre carrying all before her. She was mistaken, for the Queen was changed. The latter now feared her former friend as much as she had loved her. She had fallen a victim to the influence of the handsome and insinuating Mazarin, of whom the King had once prophetically said to her : "Il vous plaira, madame, parce qu'il ressemble à Buckingham." *Mais c'était Buckingham avec un autre génie.*

Mazarin held the same opinion of Mme. de Chevreuse as Charles XIII. and Richelieu had held, and felt that in the heart of Anne there was not room for her and for himself ; therefore he persuaded the queen that by loading her former favourite with wealth and honours she would sufficiently discharge her debt of gratitude.

The first attempt of Mme. de Chevreuse was to restore Châteauneuf to power,\* but the clever duchess saw a hard fight before her, and not daring to attack Mazarin directly, set herself to undermine slowly the ground around him and prepare his ruin.

While closely following the intrigues of Madame and the Cardinal, it is difficult to say which showed most ability and skill. La Rochefoucauld paints admirably the commencement and progress of this curious struggle. He says ; "Dans ces premiers temps ils étaient en coquetterie l'un avec l'autre." Later, the Cardinal, beginning to feel himself surrounded by assassins, was convinced that they had Mme. de Chevreuse at their head. And he was right.

On the 2nd September, 1643, Paris resounded with the news

\* Châteauneuf had to wait long ; but he did not die without enjoying, for a brief space, that power which a mad love had lost him, and which a faithful and indefatigable friendship at length restored.

of the frustrated attempt to murder Mazarin between the Louvre and the hôtel de Clèves.

Five of the conspirators fled. Had the duchesse done so, it would have been to denounce herself. The queen professed to believe her innocent, but nevertheless desired her to go for a time to Dampierre. While there, instead of remaining quiet, she moved heaven and earth to save those who were compromised with her, sending money and help to all, continuing also her political machinations. Under shelter of the English Ambassador, Lord Goring, an immense correspondence was established between Mme. de Chevreuse, Vendôme, Bouillon, and all the malcontents. But Mazarin discovered it and gave orders for the duchesse to be imprisoned in the fortress of Angoulême. She narrowly escaped by flying once more into voluntary exile.

But this time all was changed ; her youth and beauty, which had made so many conquests, were departing. Accompanied by her daughter Charlotte, she reached Saint-Malo, embarking there in mid-winter on a little ship which was to take her to Dartmouth in England ; but Cromwell's men-of-war met and took the miserable barque to the Isle of Wight. There, Mme. de Chevreuse was recognised, and as she was known to be a friend of the queen of England, they were near treating her badly and delivering her up to Mazarin. Fortunately, she discovered in the governor of the island her old friend the Earl of Pembroke ; from him she received passports, and proceeded on her way.

For a time she settled at Liège, and strengthened an alliance—as the last resort of her party—between the duc de Lorraine, Austria and Spain. The odds were against her ; but her ascendancy over Charles IV. originating in a love which proved stronger than any of the newer loves of this inconstant prince, enabled her to frustrate the projects of Mazarin.

It is impossible in this brief sketch to follow her step by step in the labyrinthine intrigues of the Fronde. Suffice it to say she played a first part. Deeply attached to her party and to its essential interests, she steered it clear of rocks with incomparable skill and vigour.

In 1650, she supported the side of Mazarin against Condé. Her political instinct taught her that after so many agitations a

solid and lasting power was most desirable for France. Mazarin, who like Richelieu had never opposed her but with regret, now courted her and was often glad to follow her counsels. She took her stand proudly by the side of royalty ; she served it and made use of it by turns. All that she desired was now obtainable for herself and for her party. She reached the highest summit of credit and consideration ; and thus ended in profound peace one of the most agitated and eventful careers of the 17th century.

It is said of her that in her later days she turned her eyes towards heaven ; they had grown weary with the things of earth.

After seeing all whom she loved and hated perish, the exalted duchesse became the humblest of women. She left her magnificent hôtel in the faubourg Saint-Germain, and retired to the country ; not to Dampierre, the scene of so many former splendours, but to a small house at Gagny, near Chelles. She was interred in the little old church of Gagny.

There, in the centre aisle, near the chapel of the Virgin, a faithful and unknown hand has added this epitaph to the black marble that bears her name :

“ L’humilité ayant fait mourir dans son cœur toute la grandeur du siècle, elle défendit que l’on fit revivre à sa mort la moindre marque de cette grandeur qu’elle voulutachever d’ensevelir sous la simplicité de cette tombe, ayant ordonné qu’on l’enterrât dans la paroisse de Gagny, où elle est morte à l’âge de soixante-dix-neuf ans, le 12 Août, 1679.”

E. M. DAVY.

## Gillian's Child.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BABY JACK," ETC.

### CHAPTER I.

THE March winds were wailing over Howton Moss. Tearing along over sullen streams, jet black of hue, on which the moon shone brightly, displaying the contrast between them and the strips of snow that had drifted up, tossed hither and thither by the rough breeze, and lay alongside the inky moss-pools. The moonlight revealing the moorland waste, the barrenness of the thinly-populated district given over to plover, bittern, and grouse, to woodcock and snipe, that loved the marshy land ; and teals, widgeons, wild duck, and mallards, who did not disdain its inky pools. A bleak, drear solitude, with but a mere trace of a cart track, that vanished here and there in the snowy slush and mire, and left nothing but a monotonous waste of peaty blackness all around striped with snow.

A dull prospect, with never a hut or house to break its weird monotony, and only the moon, obscured now and then by a passing cloud, for a lamp to light on the way any belated traveller who might have to face the gruesome terrors of Howton Moss at midnight.

Such an one there was that bleak March night in the year of our Lord 1810, who had to cross the Moss in response to an imperative summons that he dared not disobey, curse how he might between his teeth, shiver how he would under the enveloping folds of his heavy riding-cloak, quake though he did, when the moon hid her light, at the prospect of being engulfed in a morass that would swallow up a coach and four, and leave never a sign behind to tell of death and disaster.

Slowly and steadily the horseman rode on, following the track when it was visible, riding very cautiously when it vanished amid the peaty blackness, and pulling up short when the animal he bestrode floundered about in the treacherous, pulpy bog, over

his fetlocks in slush. Then he would peer down at the black mass beneath him, and if the moon were behind a cloud, remain stationary until she reappeared, keeping himself warm with a volley of oaths, both loud and deep, and when he could again see would rein his steed back cautiously and regain the track. But always he kept his face to the east, and steered steadily for that point of the compass, and as the wind was blowing from that quarter, and lashed his face as it howled dismally by, it added materially to the discomfort of his position.

"A murrain on t' lass wi' her cantrips," he muttered savagely, as he bent his head to avoid the icy blast. "If I ha' dared, I ha' left her to die wi' her brat. T'were better so, only I must obey Lady Louisa. She holds me i' t'e hollow of her hand, and could hang me ere Easterday an' she chose," and wrapping his cloak round him closer he urged his horse to a brisker pace, keeping his eyes meanwhile fixed persistently on space straight ahead, a persistency which was rewarded after a time, for a faint light, like the gleam of a lamp or candle, shone out as a beacon for him, and quickening his pace to a gallop he soon after leaving the Moss arrived at the gate of a large stone mansion, where he dismounted, and giving his horse in charge to a rough-looking fellow, with directions to make him comfortable for the night, followed into the house a woman who had appeared at the portal at the first sound of his horse's hoofs on the stone paving of the courtyard.

"Coome ben," she said, motioning him into a small oak-panelled room.

"Am I in time?" he asked in a low tone, as he threw off his heavy cloak, disclosing the sad-coloured garments of a man of medicine which accorded ill with his repulsive, evil face.

"Ay. Toime enou'," returned the woman in broad Yorkshire dialect. "Mebbe though 'twill boide till to-morrow. Ey'd as leesce it boided tull to-morrow."

"I wouldn't," rejoined the man quickly. "'Tis best got over quickly."

"Doan't think tha-at, Master Claverstoke," replied the woman with a grin. "'Twill be a long jo-ab. Loike enou' to-morrow noight."

"Not wi' a little o' this," he said, tapping a packet he drew from his pocket.

"Good lorgus, doan't let her leddyship see yo-an givin' that to Mistress Gillian or——"

"Tut, tut, Dame Branderer, think'st thou I'm a fool?"

"Noa—noa, onny her leddyship lo'es her still, nowi'standin' t'e shame on her."

"Ah, well, it may all be right yet."

"Noa, noa. Her lover's Jock o' Reekdoon, and yo' ken he's married a'ready."

"By the Lord Harry, is't so?"

"Ay."

"Then what will Lady Louisa do if t'e child lives?"

"If 't lives, 'twull be meh care," returned Dame Branderer darkly, with significant emphasis.

"I see," smiled the saturnine doctor.

"Shall I go up now?" he asked the next minute, casting a half reluctant glance at the table, where stood a steaming tankard of hot water, some spirits, and a bottle of port, crusted and cob-webbed with the dust and dirt of many years.

"Noa. Sit yo' doon and take a stoup, I moinde meh yo-an want it after yo' roide."

"Yes. 'Twas cold," he said, seating himself at once by the fire and pouring out a bumper of port, as the woman went out, and proceeded upstairs to a suite of rooms in the east wing, shut off from the rest of the house by a heavy green baize door.

In the furthermost of these rooms, before a blazing fire that leapt redly up the wide chimney, sat a haughty-looking woman of some thirty-eight or forty summers, a woman who still retained many remains of great beauty, but whose face was marred by the intolerant look of pride that never left it. She was sitting upright in the great armchair, a long thin white hand clutching either arm, and in her cold blue eyes was a mingled look of terrible anger, and still more terrible fear.

She turned her white face to the woman as she entered.

"Has he come?"

"Yes, yo' leddyship."

"Tell him to come up at once."

"Yes, yo' leddyship," and the woman retreated, and Lady Louisa sat before the fire a prey to most grievous thoughts and reflections, while ever and anon her eyes wandered to the great four-post bed in the dim distant corner, which looked like a

hearse, with its black nodding plumes, and which she almost wished was a hearse for the miserable young creature who lay stretched on it.

Her daughter! Her only child! Once so dearly beloved, for whom she had planned such a brilliant future, and now——? Well, if she lived it might be hushed up—but—if she died!

Once more the look of terror deepened in the lady's eyes, once more her face grew pale as death, at the mere thought of such a catastrophe. It was not only the shame that she, the daughter of a hundred earls, would have to bear, there was the loss of her child also. For she loved her still, despite her sin, which was more one of ignorance than wickedness, and the mother blamed herself as she sat before the blazing fire. Why had she left the child to the care of hirelings in their remote Yorkshire home, while she went up with her husband, Squire Harverton, to the Court of His Gracious Majesty George III., to display her loveliness and queen it as a beauty over many younger women? The natural consequence ensued. The child in the first flush of her youth,

“Standing with reluctant feet,  
Where the brook and river meet,  
Womanhood and childhood sweet.”

had been wooed to her ruin by a handsome rascal, already married, who could make no reparation for the ill he had wrought, and all her chances, Lady Louisa thought, with the mighty Earl of Howton-Trevor, who had admired Gillian greatly when staying at the Moss House, were over.

Still it might be hushed up. The Squire was away. Had been for a month, would be for two months more. *He* need know nothing. Claverstoke was in her power, she could get him hanged at Tyburn if she chose, and Dame Branderer loved money better than she loved her own soul. If only Gillian did not die all would yet be well, and she rose as the doctor entered the room and went forward to meet him with all her old haughty air.

“Master Claverstoke,” she said coldly, “methinks I can put implicit trust in you?”

“Your ladyship may,” he replied, bowing low before her.

“Then—my daughter will be a mother—” the words seemed

nearly to choke her as they left her white, quivering lips—"ere another day dies down into night—she must live! Do you hear me?"

"I hear your ladyship."

"This must—be concealed."

"I understand—and—the child?"

"If it lives, which God forbid, it will be nurse Branderer's charge, if it dies—so much the better," she said slowly.

"I understand," he said again, while a saturnine smile played about his lips.

"I will have no *murder*," she added sharply, "mind that."

"I will obey," he rejoined, though his face became lividly pale, as he turned away and approached his unfortunate young patient, whose years did not yet number eighteen. Through the long hours of that dreary night, Lady Louisa sat immovable, outwardly, as a marble statue, inwardly, a prey to consuming anguish of the most terrible kind, and when the grey light of the March morning stole through the shuttered windows, the feeble wail of an infant was heard. But it was soon silenced and ere the day was many hours old, Dame Branderer entered the clumsy covered cart, used by the servants in their jaunts to and from the town of York, some twenty miles distant, with a bundle in her arms, and was driven off by her husband to see her daughter, who was married to a miner at the Tees Coal Pit, ten miles the other side of Howton Moss, and who had recently become a mother.

Gillian Harverton never saw her baby. Whatever her feelings may have been she was never allowed to display them, nor even to speak of her luckless offspring. Lady Louisa peremptorily and harshly stopped her whenever she did try to ascertain the fate of the little child to whom she had given birth. That was all a sealed book. No one knew of it but Claverstoke, Dame Branderer, and Lady Louisa. The former's passage she paid to America, and gave him a sum of money wherewith to start afresh there, while Dame Branderer, soon after becoming a widow, was bought by her ladyship a snug little inn on the London road, about forty miles out of the metropolis, and she wanted for nothing, and as Gillian's lips were naturally sealed, from necessity rather, perhaps, than choice, her haughty ladyship felt safe, and able to encourage

the attentions of their neighbour the Earl of Howton-Trevor, who, whenever he visited his Yorkshire mansion, shewed unmistakeably how much he admired Gillian's lovely, winsome face, and gracefully proportioned form.

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## CHAPTER II.

BEN BOULTBEE, Dame Branderer's son-in-law, lived in a little cottage some three-quarters of a mile from the Tees Coal Pit. He was an average specimen of the Yorkshire miner of his day, neither better nor worse, perhaps, than his fellows with whom he laboured in the bowels of the earth for a precarious living. He had started by being a trifle above them, but disappointment, and the cares and troubles of a large and ever increasing family, brought him down to the brutish level of the lowest amongst them.

The disappointment arose from his marriage. When he had united himself in an underhand fashion to the young and only child of the housekeeper at the Moss House, he was thought by all the other young fellows about to have done a fine thing for himself, and it was popularly supposed that the old dame would provide well, if not handsomely, for the comfort of the young couple. However, the contrary held. The good woman never forgave her daughter for mating with a man who was only a miner, and who, greatest crime of all, had not a penny-piece saved toward starting a home, and instead of coming down with a "tocher," as supposed, she never gave them a bawbee, and made it an excuse for keeping her gold pieces to herself. Those gold pieces that she loved better than anything else in the world, and gloated over as an infidel does over his fetich.

That Boultbee was disappointed is too mild a term. He was furious, and took to drink and ill-using his wife simultaneously, the advent of every fresh offspring, and they arrived regularly every year in ones, twos, and occasionally in threes, being the signal for a fresh outbreak of brutality, the result being displayed in the rainbow-hued faces of his unfortunate family, whose visages he painted liberally with the sledge-hammer-like blows of his huge fist. Ten children were

already living, or rather existing, in the foul-smelling, insanitary, tumble-down cottage on the Yorkshire moor, when Gillian's unfortunate infant was taken there, and he was only welcome because Dame Branderer brought with him a packet containing fifty golden pieces, and a big bundle of baby-clothes, the larger part of which Mistress Marjorie Boultbee immediately appropriated for her own sturdy brat's use, the last addition to the family circle being exactly twenty-one days old, arguing if the little stranger was to share his lacteal nourishment, *he* had a decided right to share the little stranger's clothing, and this rule she rigidly applied to everything connected with Billy No-Name, as he came to be called, Dame Branderer having given no particulars of his parentage, etc., only stating that the fifty pounds was the price of their silence, and to defray the cost of the maintenance of the child until he was old enough to earn his own living, which alas! in those days was at a cruelly tender age, when they were little more than babies.

In the year of our Lord 1810, and even so late as 1842, there was no law to prevent Yorkshire colliery owners from exacting fourteen and fifteen hours of monotonous and heavy toil daily from the tender, immature frames of little children, many of whom had lived barely half as many years. They laboured from early morn till late at night at heavy tasks that killed them before manhood or womanhood was reached; or, if a sturdy few managed to survive those years of degrading, horrid toil, they left the stamp of premature age and weakness on faces that should have been flushed with youth and health.

Ben Boultbee had made all his own children when they reached the age of six or seven years go to work in the pit. It was nothing uncommon, all the folk about did it. In the Yorkshire collieries, at that time, unhappy creatures, bond-slaves of that age, had to crawl along passages, many of which were only two feet high, not so good as a common sewer, dragging along slowly and laboriously, a truck filled with coals, by a thick chain attached to a girdle that clasped their nearly naked bodies, and the friction and pressure of which rubbed the tender skin, and wore it away, leaving a ghastly raw wound, to be chafed and galled till the blood ran down by that terrible iron chain, that passed under their legs, for the lowness of the passages obliged them to pass on all fours, like the beasts of the field, whose free

life and comparative immunity from unceasing toil and unbearable pain, these miserable little serfs might well have envied.

And it was to an existence of this sort that Gillian's unhappy child was doomed.

The first years of his life were hardly happy, though he met with no particular ill-usage from his foster father and mother, still he never heard a kindly word, or met a kindly smile, or knew what it was to be well-clothed, and quite free from hunger, or the greater part of the year from cold. Still, when the summer days came, and the moor was sparsely decked with flowers, and the skies were sapphire blue, and the sun shone mellow and warm, and a few stray butterflies winged their flight across the inky pools, then he would run out and enjoy nature as best he could, and forget for a little while the dark, noisome den that was all the home he knew, and the harsh voices, angry looks, and heavy hands of those with whom his lot was cast.

However this came to an end when he turned his sixth birthday and was eligible for work in that dark yawning pit, whose black gaping jaws had entombed and crushed out the life of so many hapless child-slaves. There was to be no respite, no hope for him. Dame Branderer, when she left Lady Louisa Harverton's service, had sent her daughter a present of ten pounds, given her for that purpose by her mistress, with an intimation that no more would be forthcoming for Billy No-Name's maintenance, and she wisely left no address behind her, wishing to keep all her golden pieces for herself, and putting it out of her daughter's power to beg for a share of them. Meanwhile, Lady Louisa had taken Gillian up to London to the family mansion in Gower Street, so neither Ben Boultee nor his wife could obtain any news at the Moss House of the dame's whereabouts, and considering themselves tricked, or at least the man doing so, made him brutally savage and furious against the defenceless child left at his mercy, a mercy as tender as that of the wild-boar against an enemy, or a starved wolf of the snow-clad Russian steppes when its prey is within reach of its ravening jaws.

"He gaes doon te pit turmorrow," said Ben on the eve of the child's sixth natal day, casting an angry glance at the corner where Billy lay sleeping, his fair head pillow'd on a bundle

of rags, his long black lashes lying darkly on his pale cheeks.

"It's ower soon," objected Marjorie, a ray of pity darting through her heart as she too looked at Billy.

"Noa."

"Let un boide a bit loonger aboove grund, till un's a bit strounger."

"Noa, I tell ee," cried the man furiously, "Ee sell wark. Did'st theaw say onnythink when Nick, oor Ruger weant doon?"

"They wust seven, and a mort strounger nor Billy."

"Ay, ay. He's a timmersome teyke. Ey's towd yo so afore oftentimes. Loike enou' he'll yowl, as I towd yo. Ey ses let un. Whoy shud he luve in aise whon ey an' moine wark hard?"

"He's not loike us, Ben."

"Than ey'll maake him loike us, blows and wark and darkness ounder te grund u'll do it, yo see ef ey doant," and the great fellow laughed brutally as if enjoying the prospect of the child's terror and reluctance to descend the pit that ever had held a horror for him.

The next day Ben was as good as his word, and took the shrinking, trembling child down with him to the black, dimly lit pit, and despite his agonised prayers and entreaties fastened a girdle round his waist, attached to one of the coal trucks, and with blows and curses, made the poor little fellow strain and tug at the heavy load till he succeeded in dragging it down the sewer-like passage to the place where the baskets were filled to go up to the pit's mouth. Again and again he was forced by most cruel usage to perform this task far beyond his feeble strength, until after several hours' work he was hauled up above ground, and stumbled, more dead than alive, into the tumble-down cottage that was all the home he knew, where he lay like a log stupefied with fatigue and pain.

The next day he was taken down again, and after two or three toilsome journeys, the skin, chafed thin from the work of the day before, broke, and the blood ran down his sides, while he suffered agony so terrible that no pen could possibly depict it. It was indescribable. As the dreary days wore on, the miserable little serf grew silent, humbly, doggedly accepting his burden without a single protest. He had learnt that to beg

for mercy from monsters in human form was worse than useless. It only brought down on his shrinking frame a double allowance of heavy blows. If he said anything, he was cruelly beaten. He had to do it, or be thrashed within an inch of his life, until every bone ached, and they ached, God knew, enough from his toilsome labour. At evening, when his work was over, and he was allowed to rise from his degraded position, he was unable to straighten his back, and perforce remained in a huddled-up attitude through the weary nights. Perhaps owing to the fact that he was the offspring of the "Classes" and not of the "Masses," the child could not stand the work like some of his low-born fellow-serfs did. He began at once to fall away. The outline of his face soon became sharp, and cruelly well-defined, the orbit of the eyes hollowed, and the eyes themselves grew dim and misty, and wore a terrified, piteous expression. At the end of three months his constitution was broken up, and life in his poor, wan frame flickered uncertainly, like the flame of an expiring candle.

Still there was no respite for him. No pity shown him. Who cared whether this miserable waif lived or died? Not one in the whole wide world. His mother in the whirl and excitement of town life had forgotten his existence. Marjorie Boultbee had had all the womanhood and softness beaten out of her nature by her brutal husband, and looked on her foster-child as only another nuisance in her wretched den, while Ben absolutely detested the unfortunate little creature.

"*Must I gae doon?*" he queried wistfully, one June morning, as he stood by the pit's mouth, glancing with hungry longing in his sad eyes at the flower-spangled moor, where the sun was shining bravely.

"In coarse," roared Ben. "Gae doon, yo' yo'ng hoond, or I'll beet yo' to ar jeely," and a few minutes later poor Billy was in the black bowels of the earth.

But the foul air underground seemed to suffocate him. He reeled dizzily and leant against the pit side, until a blow from Ben sent him crawling to his usual station, where the coal truck was fastened to his girdle, and he started down the passage, struggling, toiling, panting, his heart throbbing to bursting and then dying away to a feeble flutter, the sweat pouring down his poor grimy little face, the blood dripping from his galled, aching

sides, that felt as though seared by a red-hot iron whenever the cruel chain, drawn taut by the heavily loaded truck, touched them, and bit into the raw wounds, sharp as the prod of a serpent's fang. Little Billy toiled on, a deathly faintness on him, a faintness that rendered him now and again for one short merciful moment insensible to the intolerable anguish he suffered. But every time he came to, he raised his heavy head from the cold pillow on which it had rested and struggled forward, gasping painfully, his breath becoming shorter and shorter.

At last he reached the end of the long sewer-like passage where Ben and the overseer stood.

"I canna do noa moare," he gasped, looking up into Boulbee's hard face, with the appeal of a dumb animal brought to bay and in deadly fear in his blue eyes, dim and filmy from anguish.

"Yo' d——d yo'ng hoond, gae on," shouted the man, lifting his heavy stick and letting it fall across the child's bruised and bleeding back in brutal fashion.

Billy gave a dreadful screech as the blow struck him, struggled convulsively on to all fours, strained at the chain ineffectually, and then fell—a dirty, bloody, coal-grimed, little heap—at his cruel taskmaster's feet.

He administered some more blows and a hearty kick or two upon the inanimate form, then the overseer, seeing these usually effective measures were useless, roughly ordered one of the miners to take the child up to the pit's mouth, which was done, and he was thrown down like a sack of rubbish hard by.

The sun was shining brightly when his senses returned to him, and he was dazzled at first by the brilliance. Then as he became accustomed to the light he looked round, lifting his head languidly for a second, only to let it drop back wearily on its earthy pillow. Far above, in the cerulean ether, somewhere at heaven's golden gate, a lark was trilling out her morning song, and Billy listened dreamily, wondering in a dim sort of way why he felt so very, very tired, and why his heart beat so slowly and faintly, and wishing that his bruised body and galled sides would stop aching, if only for a moment, and let him lie in peace, and look up at the blue, blue sky, that overarched all like a vast sapphire, and at the big tree that he could see over away to the left with its bright green summer livery.

But the pains grew worse. His breath seemed to choke him. His throat, his lips were parched.

Oh ! for a draught of clear, sweet water to slake that dreadful thirst. Oh ! for the touch of a cool, soft hand to ease the throbbing of his burning brows. Oh ! for the sound of a gentle voice such as he had often dreamt of.

But there was no one near. No one to hear his faint cry of "Water, water." He was alone, and the sky was growing misty to his dim blue eyes, and the sunshine paler, and the lark's song sounded distant and far away.

He felt a coldness creeping over him. A dreadful, deathly chill, that turned the blood in his veins to ice. It was all dark now before his closing eyes. He made a feeble effort to rise, pressed his hand against his galled side, and then fell back with a groan on the damp sod, dead. His spirit fled, as his lips gave forth that last cry of anguish, of protest against a slavery too terrible to be borne and live under.

And as little Billy lay dying on the brink of the Yorkshire coal-pit, without a creature near him to comfort him or help him, to soothe the bitter anguish of the last hour of his brief life, his mother, in a splendid brocaded gown, her fair neck and arms loaded with flashing gems, was being presented on her marriage with the Earl of Howton-Trevor, to the "First Gentleman in Europe," and his royal mother and father, and was curtseying with exquisite grace, and smiling at their suavity and kindness, which promised such a brilliant future for her at Court.

## A Lover's Secret.

BY MRS. LOVETT CAMERON,

Author of "In a Grass Country," "A Devout Lover," "A Lost Wife,"  
"This Wicked World," Etc.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

#### A FRIEND IN NEED.

"The heart bowed down by weight of woe  
To weakest hope will cling."

—ALFRED BUNN.

IN a large airy room lighted by a sky-light, a score or so of young women were seated at work. There was a litter of bright-hued silks and trimmings, a shimmer of delicate frillings and laces—a general effect as of a wind-blown flower-garden in a condition of wild disorder all over the room. The girls all looked healthy and contented; there was not much open talking, save about their work, amongst them—but there were covert whisperings and low-voiced jokes passed occasionally from one to the other, generally accompanied by nervous looks in the direction of the door, whence, at any moment, Mrs. Waterson herself or one of the head "young ladies," with beautiful figures clad in wrinkleless black silk, might be expected to emerge.

Most of these girls—who worked hard, rising early, and sitting up late, in order to fashion the many-hued raiment of their richer and luckier fellow women—were good-natured-looking but not specially interesting or attractive in appearance, all save one who sat apart, bending over her work—a delicate, filmy flounce of creamy white which she was diligently employed in hemming.

It was a month since Constance Waterson, out of the charity of her large womanly heart, had taken Madge home in her hansom

and put her to bed in the little spare room in her pretty house in the Regent's Park. Since then Madge had been very ill with a sharp attack of brain fever, and all her pretty gold-brown tresses had been cut off quite short, and her soft hair clustered now in short, curly rings all round her small, thoroughbred head. When she got well enough to remember and to talk, her first agonised questionings were after her boy, and Mrs. Waterson's tender sympathy soon drew from her the whole story of her sorrows and misfortunes. She told her all—only keeping back from her the name of the man to whose ill-fated love she owed the whole desolation of her life.

"You have been indeed good to me," said the poor girl, whilst tears of weakness streamed from her eyes; "but it would have been kinder to have left me to die. I wish—oh, how I wish I had died!"

"You must not say that, my dear; if it had been your appointed time to die God would certainly not have suffered me to rescue you from death." By which it will be seen that Constance was something of a fatalist in her views.

"But what have I to live for?" cried Madge brokenly. "My child was all I had left to me—and now I have lost him for ever."

"That is not in the least likely, my dear. London is certainly a large place, but it is not so large but that time and money and interest can sift it through from end to end. I will help you to find your boy. I know a gentleman who is one of the Chief Commissioners of the Police—he was a friend of my father's—he will do anything for me; I shall place the matter in his hands. You cannot help by rushing about the streets yourself—you must learn to wait and be patient until we hear something more."

"And starve in the meantime!" cried Madge, striking her hands passionately together. "Mrs. Waterson, I have not a penny in the world! How I am to repay all I owe you I cannot imagine—how I can live in the future I do not know. There is nothing but despair before me! It were better that I had died!"

"Now you are talking foolishly, there need be no such thing as despair for any of us. My dear, I have gone through the mill of adversity myself, and I know. I have known what it is to be

hungry, and to see my children hungry too—and that, as you know, you poor child, is fifty thousand times worse ! But as to despairing—not one of us have any right to do that as long as life and brains are left to us. There is always some path open to us to take—for you, in fact, I can see two."

" What do you mean, Mrs. Waterson ? "

" Wait a minute and I will tell you. But, to begin with, don't talk about paying me back, because you know I don't expect such a thing and it only makes me angry when you say it. It has given me pleasure to help you, and I can, thank God, afford myself such pleasures now. I want to help you still more if you will only meet me half way and help yourself."

Madge nestled up to her with a little caressing action which was infinitely charming and loveable.

" Now I will tell you what you can do, dear child," continued Mrs. Waterson ; " you can, in the first place, return to your old aunt's house."

" Oh, no ! no ! "

" Well, I don't say that you ought to do so, only that you can if you choose."

" She would never forgive me. You do not know her. And I could not leave London whilst my boy is still unfound."

" Very well, we will say no more about that. So now we will come to the other thing. You must put your pride in your pocket and come and work for me when you are strong enough."

" Pride, Mrs. Waterson ! could I have such a thing as Pride ? Oh, do you think I really can work for you ? I would do it for nothing, gladly, if you think I can only be of use to you ? "

" Well, I don't want you to do it for nothing, because that would be foolish. I don't say that the pay is very much, but it is something to keep you alive anyhow, and if you are quick and ready you will soon learn to make yourself useful in the work-room. I want more hands. I am very busy just now, we are in the middle of a large and very elaborate trousseau, which has to be ready by the first week in December. I cannot as a fact get workers enough, and you will be a help to me. But, of course, I shall pay you just as I pay the others, and you

can stay on here for the present—I shall be glad of your company at home—and if you like you can give me something towards your keep as long as you are with me. So now, my dear, dry your tears and make haste and get well as soon as you can."

Strengthened and cheered by the tonic of this brisk little woman's sensible advice and kindly help, Madge grew daily stronger, and her naturally healthy constitution shook off the effects of her sharp attack of illness in an incredibly short time.

But for the harrowing anxiety which prayed upon her with regard to Johnny, she would have been almost happy.

Even about this she grew to be more patient and hopeful when she had seen the gentleman in whose hands Mrs. Waterson placed the case, and had received his assurances that the child could not have been killed or starved to death, or else the fact would by now have come to his knowledge—that he must certainly be under the protection of some charitable persons and that no stone should be left unturned to find him.

Madge went to her work amongst the young women in the large work-room with a patient, if not a contented, heart. Even here, her kind friend's thoughtfulness smoothed the way for her beforehand. She was introduced to the rest as a friend of Mrs. Waterson's anxious to learn the business, only light and easy work was to be set to her, and the girl who sat next to her at the long table was told to help her in anything which she found difficult.

She had always been quick and clever with her needle, and after the first day or two, when she became more accustomed to the work, she encountered no difficulties to speak of. Miss Collings, the girl who sat next to her, found little occasion to help her, and the head woman in the room was pleased with her neatness and natural ability.

True, the social atmosphere of the workshop was neither instructive nor entertaining, the conversation ran mostly upon the dresses under construction—when they were to be finished—whose dinner-gown was to go home that night—what fresh orders had come in—what alterations had to be made.

But of all that was talked about, and all the customers whose

clothes were discussed, no one came in for more criticism than the bride elect whose trousseau was the chief object of everybody's thought and labour.

Madge, with her thoughts often far away in other scenes and other memories, caught herself more than once listening unconsciously to the chatter around her.

"Where is that gold trimming, Miss Collings?"

"I laid it on the table, Miss Dunn."

"Is it for the green velvet or for the black silk?"

"For the black, of course. I say, that pale green satin won't suit her a bit, will it, Miss Evans?"

"No, it don't, I was in the room when Mademoiselle was fitting her with it—I was holding the pins, you know—it don't suit her complexion, she's too dark, nor yet her figure neither—nobody would believe it who hadn't known it for a fact that her waist measures twenty-two."

"It's her being so tall makes it look less," said another.

"And her arms—my! they are fat! I don't call it pretty, do you, Miss Dunn? Just look at this sleeve, it might be for a leg of pork!"

"It's nothing to Miss de Vere's, *she's* got an arm if you like."

"And a waist too," cried another. "Twenty-eight inch her plush tea-gown measured from button to buttonhole, and I ought to know as I had all the bother of it; and then there's Mrs. Halwell, *she's* got a waist if you like."

And so on, and so on. Every lady's size, height, and appearance being freely criticised and commented upon in turn. Oh! if only some of these fine fashionable ladies had heard them! Who can be a goddess to her dressmaker, still less to her dressmaker's apprentices?

One day, Mrs. Waterson came into the room and silently handed to Madge a letter which she had received—it was from Colonel Drummond, the police commissioner. A child picked up in the streets about the time when Johnny had been lost, had been almost certainly traced to a certain district in Whitechapel, by this evening he would have fuller information, and if as he hoped, it was the right little boy, he would send him up to Regent's Park with a special messenger for his mother to identify him. Madge's heart beat wildly as she read, and her

eyes, brimming over with a great joy, met Mrs. Waterson's as she stood opposite to her. Constance placed her finger upon her lips and silently stretched out her hand for the letter again. It was not the time nor the place to speak about it now, but she had not been able to resist coming up stairs herself to bring this ray of hope and comfort to the mother's heart. Her eyes flashed her congratulations, but she went on giving sundry small directions to the women as though that had been the sole object of her visit to the work-room.

One of the forewomen came in at that moment.

"Lady Mary is here, ma'm, with Miss Verinder, to try on the wedding bodice."

Mrs. Waterson hastened away, turning back to say as she left the room followed by the head fitter :

"One of you girls will be wanted too — Miss Durham." Madge half rose from her chair to obey, and then Constance fancied she saw a reluctant shyness in her face and added quickly, "No, not Miss Durham—Miss Collings will be the best. Poor child," she thought to herself as she hurried downstairs to receive her customers, "she would rather, I daresay, sit quiet and think over the good news in that letter!"

Oh—if Madge had only gone! if only she had known who it was in the showroom, dressed up in a smart little velvet tunic and clinging to Lady Mary's silken skirts, how she would have flown downstairs!

By-and-bye, when Miss Collings came back again she began talking to her neighbours in a low voice about the ladies in the showroom. "Miss Verinder, that is the bride you know, Miss Durham, wore a dove grey cloth dress and a mantle to match, with a chinchilla muff and cape, and a little grey hat and feather. She did look lovely! She's like that beautiful lady who used to act at the Alhambra last winter, don't you remember? Oh no, you are a country girl you say and don't know the theatres. Well, she was that tall and handsome she might have been a duchess—just like Miss Verinder—and Lady Mary——"

"Is Lady Mary her mother?" asked Madge, with but a languid interest, for she was thinking about Colonel Drummond's letter.

"No, she's her future mother-in-law. Miss Verinder is to marry her Ladyship's son."

It did not occur to Madge to enquire this gentleman's name. What was Lady Mary to her?

"Her Ladyship brought such a sweet little boy with her to-day," continued Miss Collings presently, reaching across Madge to get a reel of silk from the table, "her grandson I suppose."

"Yes? was he pretty?"

"Oh, a *dear* little fellow! and he was so prettily dressed, in a little black velvet suit with a broad red sash round his waist and a falling collar of guipure lace, and he was jumping about wanting to play with me whilst I was holding the pins to Mademoiselle. I was so amused with him—and her Ladyship she seemed so fond of him she could hardly attend to the fitting of Miss Verinder's bodice for looking after the child."

But it never occurred to Madge to ask what the boy was like. To Miss Collings his smart clothes were evidently of far more importance than his face—it is doubtful indeed whether she would have been able to remember the colour of his eyes and hair.

And so her child had been for a whole half-hour in the very same house with her and she had never known it! nor that it was Jack's mother who had brought him there. For it will be remembered that long ago, in his foolishness, Jack had concealed his mother's name from her with the false and mistaken egotism which had made him desire to win her love for himself independently of his position and prospects in the world. As if such a one as Madge Durham would ever have been capable of loving him for any mean or unworthy motive!

So fate, that had played such strange tricks with her life conjured away her chances once more, and left her in ignorance still.

That night too a bitter disappointment awaited her, the little boy who had been found in Whitechapel was duly sent up under the care of a policeman to Mrs. Waterson's house, but when he arrived there it was not Johnny!

It was a shallow-faced, swarthy-complexioned child, with a heavy brow and thick, underbred features—his eyes indeed were

brown, and he might have been three or four years old, and there the resemblance ended. The detectives had followed a wrong clue!

The blow was so bitter and so unexpected—for somehow both women had made certain that it could be no other child than Johnny—that Madge laid awake, crying and sighing, the whole night long; and a fresh paroxysm of utter despair concerning the fate of her boy overwhelmed her. Even Mrs. Waterson looked grave and anxious at breakfast time the next morning and could find no new consolations to suggest.

She could only preach patience and resignation, and murmur vaguely that she must wait and try to have faith in the goodness of God.

It all sounded very trite and commonplace even to herself as she uttered the words; for at her heart she began to fear that Johnny would never be found. Either he must be dead, or else he had been taken away out of London and would be heard of no more. Such experiences have been known.

The best thing for Madge to do would be to learn to be resigned to the worst, and to make up her mind to live without him. She did not like to say so, but that was what she thought.

Madge would have liked to have stayed away from her work that day, but Mrs. Waterson had too much good sense to allow her to do so.

To stop at home and cry would only make matters worse, and occupation was the best and safest tonic for her. So they started together as usual, and Madge, before the day was over, was glad that she had braced herself up to the effort.

Towards evening, however, Mrs. Waterson, coming up into the work-room, saw that Madge was looking so worn and tired that her heart bled for her.

"Are you feeling ill, Miss Durham?" she enquired kindly, calling her, as she always did before the others, by her surname.

"My head aches a good deal," answered Madge wearily.

"A breath of air would do you good. Put away your work and go and do something for me. You may as well go as anyone else." She summoned her downstairs and gave her some directions.

There were some patterns to be taken to Miss Verinder for her to choose from, and she was to wait and bring them back with her answer.

When Madge got to Hill Street it was seven o'clock. Miss Verinder had gone up to her bedroom to dress for dinner. The patterns were sent upstairs and Madge waited in the hall.

Presently Miss Verinder's smart lady's maid tripped lightly down the staircase.

"Will you step up to Miss Verinder's room please, she wishes you to take a message to Mrs. Waterson."

Madge followed her in silence.

On the first bedroom landing she met Lady Mary coming out of a door which she carefully closed behind her; from within there came a subdued gleam as from a shaded light, and the soft, crooning refrain of a nursery rhyme.

The voice was neither young nor harmonious, for it was only old Mason, Lady Mary's maid, singing her mistress' adopted little boy to sleep.

"Hush a bye baby on the tree top,  
When the wind blows the cradle will rock,"

came the familiar droning sing-song words, which somehow struck with a strange gush of pain and recollection into the heart of the stranger passing by on the staircase outside.

"Hush a bye, baby—baby," and then the door closed behind Lady Mary and she heard no more.

"Who is this?" enquired the mistress of the house of the servant.

"A young person, my lady, from Mrs. Waterson's."

Lady Mary glanced at her carelessly. "What a lady-like looking girl," she thought, "and what a sweet, interesting face she has!"

"Miss Verinder is in her room, is she not?"

"Yes, my lady."

Madge followed the maid upstairs, and Lady Mary went through an adjoining door into her own bedroom.

Miss Verinder took a long time over the patterns, comparing them one with the other, and selecting the particular shade of green satin that she fancied would suit her complexion best.

Wrapped in a soft white cashmere dressing-gown, with swansdown at the throat and wrists, she stood under the gas-light by the dressing-table, discussing the matter with her maid and holding the patterns up against her face and admiring their effect in her glass, whilst the young woman from the dress-maker's, in the quiet black dress and with the still sad face, awaited her pleasure near the door.

Madge watched the brilliant woman under the lamplight with all the ungrudging admiration of a generous mind.

"How handsome she is!" she thought. "What glorious eyes, and how fine that thick, dark hair looks flowing down her back. So that is the bride they talk about so much. Well, she is beautiful, indeed, I hope she may be happy and that the man she is going to marry will be good to her and not make her life wretched, as Aunt Durham says all husbands do."

"Come here to the light," said Miss Verinder, turning suddenly towards her. "Why do you stand out there in the dark without offering to help? Tell me which Mrs. Waterson thinks will light up the best of these shades, and which you think suits me best."

She spoke imperiously and somewhat unpleasantly. Graciousness to her inferiors was not one of Miss Verinder's virtues. Her servants hated her. Madge coloured a little at the loud, overbearing voice. Her illusions vanished. She came forward obediently, and gave her mind and her attention to the patterns, and to sundry messages concerning them, with which Miss Verinder charged her for her employer.

When the important subject was decided, Agnes went to the writing-table and drew her cheque-book out of a drawer.

"You may as well take this cheque to Mrs. Waterson. I told her that I want to pay her separately for that fur cloak, I don't wish it to go down with the rest of the things, and she has sent me in a bill for it—can you receipt it?"

Madge said she could. Once before she had signed her own name and Mrs. Waterson's beneath it at the foot of a bill, according to Constance's directions.

When Agnes had filled in the cheque, she laid it together with the account on the table, and Madge took the pen in her hand to write as desired.

As she bent over the writing-table, Agnes was suddenly struck with the grace of the stooping figure. She looked at her for the first time as a woman, and not as a machine, and noted, with something like surprise, the perfect outlines of the well-poised head with its crown of short, soft, gold-glittered curls, the small, shell-like ear, and the delicate outline of the pure oval cheek.

When Madge lifted her face, Miss Verinder looked at her attentively. She remarked that her eyes were of a lovely blue, and her features remarkably pretty. She was a selfish, self-absorbed woman, yet so unlike the ordinary "milliner's girl" was this messenger from her dress-maker, that she could not help being struck by the difference.

"People say that Mrs. Waterson was a lady by birth," she thought, "no doubt this girl is some relation of hers—some younger sister or cousin—which would account for the refinement of her appearance."

And after Madge had gone, she had the curiosity to take up the receipted bill in order to see what name was written upon it.

She remained staring at it in utter amazement.

Across the stamp was written in clear characters,

" MADGE DURHAM,  
for MRS. WATERSON."

"By all that is wonderful, it is the 'creature' herself!" cried Agnes in breathless excitement, scarcely daring to credit her own eyes. "I knew she was not dead! What a miraculous coincidence, and what a lie my dear, superior Jack took the trouble to invent to me! What wouldn't I give to bring him face to face with her! What fun it would be—for, of course, he knows all about her. What a fool he would look, and what a trump card to play if ever I want to get the better of him!"

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## SUSPICIONS.

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.

—SHAKESPEARE.

FOR some time after the departure of the ladies from Castle Regis, the two friends pursued various forms of sport together with unabated ardour.

Hunting—for it was now November—had begun in earnest, and Lance and Jack hunted four days a week and shot pheasants on the other two. In the evenings they were both tired out with the day's exercise, and dozed peacefully, one on either side of the fireplace, over their newspapers and pipes. Lord Castlemere was away a good deal. Castle Regis disagreed with him in the autumn months, and now that Lady Mary was no longer an inmate of his house, he spent his time in paying visits to his friends in different parts of the country.

But although the two men were thus thrown entirely upon each other's society, there was, for many days, no renewal between them of a subject which, nevertheless, occupied many of their secret thoughts.

Lance fancied that there was a change in his friend. He was taciturn and often moody, sometimes they would ride for hours side by side together in going to or coming back from hunting, and yet Jack would not utter a single word. If Lance spoke to him, he would start as though awaking from a dream, and rouse himself with an evident effort for a moment to reply to his remarks, only to lapse again immediately into the same gloomy silence. Once or twice, too, he had turned suddenly to his friend as though impelled to unburden himself of something of importance, but when he was apparently upon the point of speaking, something always held him back and he would look away again in embarrassment, his lips closing together firmly as though to check the utterance of words he might afterwards regret.

Lance wondered what it all meant. He knew well that Jack's nature was reserved to a fault, and that only great trouble

would ever force him into needless confidences, and yet with an unerring instinct he divined that he longed to confide in him if only he dared to do so.

The moment when Jack could no longer hold his peace was nearer than he imagined.

Ever since that momentous conversation between them on the subject of Madge's death, Jack's conscience had been terribly awake within him, and all Lance's vague doubts and uncertainties recurred to him again and again with a cruel insistence.

The idea that she might be alive began to haunt him. The whole fabric of his own long-established convictions concerning her having fallen to the earth like a pack of cards by the fact of her, having written to Lance so short a time ago, seemed to leave him in a chaos of uncertainty concerning her fate which daily increased upon him.

How was it possible for him to marry Agnes Verinder unless he could be certain that his first wife was actually dead! As the days went by, he pondered over the problem more and more, and he began to think as Lance had thought, that if there had been deceit used at one time, there was nothing to prove that there had not been foul play at another.

Sometimes he wondered whether the letter that Lance had received had been a forgery, and sometimes (remembering that she had never answered nor responded even to his first letter in any way) it seemed to him that there must have been a plot invented by her people to defraud him of her and to make him abandon her altogether. His thoughts began to dwell upon her, not as one long loved and lost, who has gone to a better world, but as one who lived still somewhere, and might at any time return to him.

She began to visit him in his dreams. Night after night he would fancy that Madge, sweet and fresh as the country flowers amongst which he had wooed and won her, stood smiling by his bedside, beckoning to him to follow her with those slender hands which he remembered so well. Sometimes the vision of her was so real and life-like that he would awaken with a cry, with her name upon his lips and all the agony of losing her again in his beating heart.

At length there came a day when he realized that at any cost he must find out something more about her.

He remembered a man who might be able to help him. He remembered the Reverend Cyril Storey. Secretly and without speaking of his intention to Lance, he wrote to him at the Vicarage of Compton-on-the-Hill. His letter was guarded and very judicious. He wrote in a casual and friendly fashion, asked for news of his old friend, said how much he would like to see him again, was he married or still single? had the fever of last summer affected his Parish much? then quite at the end he wrote: "I hear sad news of Fairmead Hall; which of the old ladies was it who died there a few months ago? I have lost sight of them now and should like to know."

He regarded this letter as a very *chef d'œuvre* of diplomacy. Storey could neither be surprised nor startled by such guarded enquiries concerning the aunts of the girl he had married, and if on the other hand he knew that it was Madge who had died, surely he would make some allusion to the fact in his reply.

His cleverness was thrown away. After a week, his own letter came back to him through the dead letter office, with a large "Not Known" scrawled across the envelope.

Then at last he was reduced to speaking to Lance, still however, adhering to his intention of jealously keeping from him the secret romance of his past.

"What became of Cyril Storey, Lance?" he asked suddenly of him, as they were jogging along to the meet that morning through a network of narrow and muddy lanes.

"Now, what a curious thing you should mention him!" cried Lance. "I was just thinking about him. I saw the birth of a child of his in the paper this morning."

"What, is he married then?"

"Oh, yes, long ago—didn't you know? he married three years ago, a girl with a lot of money I believe, a Miss Graves—trust those parsons for picking up the heiresses!"

"Where is he living? I should like to see him again."

"Well, that you can't do, because he got a Chaplaincy in India through his wife's people. I see that he is at the present moment at Simla."

"And so he left Compton-on-the-Hill then?"

"Oh yes, he left it very soon after your poor father's death, I believe—after we left the dear old *Naiad* you know—I had a letter from him at the time. He had another living given him in

the North of England, where I believe he met Miss Graves and married her at a very short notice. She was pretty too, I heard," added Lance contemplatively.

But Jack was totally uninterested in Miss Graves' personal appearance—he remained silent.

In that direction at all events there was nothing further to be discovered.

He might have saved himself the trouble of writing to Compton-on-the-Hill if he had consulted Lance in the first instance, and he might have saved a whole week which he had wasted in waiting for an answer to that letter.

It was now the fourteenth of November, and his wedding-day was fixed for the tenth of December !

Between this and then he must know the truth. He could not marry Agnes—if even at some remote corner of the earth his Madge yet lived. Neither on the other hand could he for the second time break his faith to Miss Verinder on the bare suspicion of a doubt that might be only in his own imagination.

"Lance," he said to his friend that night. "I have made up my mind to run down to Fairley. Will you go with me?"

Mr. Parker looked exceedingly agitated ; had Jack let off a rocket between them on the hearthrug he could not, in fact, have been more startled.

He jumped up from his chair, and walked half across the room and back, before he was able to answer, and his voice was rough and uncompromising when he spoke at last.

"What do you want to go there for?"

"Lance, I must—I *must* know if Madge is dead," replied the other earnestly.

"You doubt it then?"

"Did you not doubt it yourself? Did you not say so?"

"My dear fellow—my own doubts—well, perhaps I should not have mentioned them, God knows they are intangible enough! If I had not, fool that I am, clung to a straw with the despair of a drowning man, I should not perhaps have revived what must always be a most painful subject between us. In the future—I do not say that I might not be weak enough to take some sort of steps to find out what became of her; but for the present—take my advice, Jack, and let it alone."

"I do not understand you, Lance, you are speaking in riddles."

"Then it is high time you should understand me, Jack," cried Lance, "we have talked in riddles too long it seems to me—now let us have no more misapprehensions about it."

He had stopped before Jack's chair, short and fat and uncouth as he was, there was a certain dignity about him, he was so terribly in earnest! The time for empty civilities was gone by, the time for grim and sober truth had come.

"Look here, Jack, you are the best of good fellows, and you are my dearest friend. But there is something that is even more sacred than friendship."

"My dear Lance——!"

"No, do not interrupt me, listen to me to the end, and then you shall say what you like. You know that I loved Madge Durham—let there be no further mysteries between us—I loved her, as I am never likely to love anybody else in this world again. But to you I resigned her, not for your sake, but for hers, because I had reason to believe that she loved you and not me."

Jack's head was bent, he leant forward upon his knees, and his whole attitude was one of intense dejection.

"Whether you loved her or no——"

"I *did* love her, Lance," he said quickly.

"Well, you may have done so, I will take your word for it, as you say so, but whether you wooed her honestly and bravely, or selfishly left her to eat out her heart in despair and loneliness, is what you alone know, and is what I will not now seek to wrest from you—that secret lies buried in your own heart, and as I most sadly fear in *her* grave. That is of the past, nothing can retrieve it—only for the present it has become my turn. You are about to be married, you are pledged to a beautiful woman whom you have deliberately chosen for your wife. You can have nothing more to do with Madge Durham. Dead or alive, she is mine. If she is dead, then it is I alone who have a right to mourn her; if, by any miracle, she be still alive, then it is I who will win her. I have been faithful to her, I gave her up to you once, and you flung her love away. I will not give her up to you a second time."

"You do not understand, Lance, you do not know all," groaned Jack.

But Lance was no longer capable of hearing him.

"I have a right to her," he repeated with a sort of angry exaltation, "alive or dead I have a right to her! Stand back, therefore, from the grave by which you have no claim to weep, keep away from the dregs of a life which you have shattered by your coldness and neglect. You shall not go to Fairley. It is I who will go there—and I will go alone!—Now, if you have anything to say, say on."

He flung himself back into his chair and waited. But Jack never spoke nor lifted his head.

—He could not bring himself to confess the truth. Even at this moment, when he realised of what vital importance to his whole future it was that he should allay every shadow of a doubt—he could not bring himself to speak the words which should disclose the sealed chapter of his secret marriage.

He recoiled from Lance's surprise and indignation, he shrank from his questioning and upbraiding. Why, indeed, should he lay himself open to so much pain and wretchedness, when in all human probability Madge was dead and he need never tell his secret?

If Lance considered him guilty now, how much more would he not blame him were he to know the whole truth?

He could not speak it.

After a long pause, he said almost humbly:

"Will you go to Fairmead at once then, Lance?"

"To-morrow, if you like."

"And will you telegraph to me instantly all that you find out?"

"Of course. I do not think, however, that we must build any hopes upon it. I will, however, see Miss Durham and I will see the clergyman of the parish and the registers, after that we can do nothing more. I will start to-morrow," he added after a pause.

"Then I will go to London, they want me in Hill Street. I will stay a few days with my mother, where you can telegraph to me any news you learn."

Both felt this resolution to be a relief. After the storm of their late conversation, it would have been almost impossible to go on with their present life together, without some sort of break.

The next morning's post, however, brought a necessary change of plans, of Jack's plans at all events.

Lord Castlemere wrote to say that he was returning to Castle Regis for a few days on his way to a flying visit to Hill Street. It was necessary that Jack should remain where he was, to welcome his uncle. After that they might go on together to London.

Lance started from Northminster by an afternoon train and the carriage which took him to the station brought Lord Castlemere home.

His uncle arrived with evident trouble on his brow. On entering the house he looked about him for Lance Parker, and seemed somewhat relieved to hear that Lance had gone south for a few days.

"I am glad of it, my boy, glad of it. The fact is, much as I like Parker personally and highly as I value him as a friend for you, there are still critical times in every family history when it is better to be alone."

"And is this a critical time, uncle?"

"Yes, my boy, yes." And then Jack perceived that his uncle had something of importance to communicate to him.

Shortly after his arrival he summoned his nephew into his study.

"Jack," he said, with impressive solemnity, "I have something of a painful nature to communicate to you."

For a moment Jack's heart stood still, and the room seemed to go round with him. *Madge!* was the unspoken exclamation of his whole being. But it was not about Madge.

"My dear Jack, you know, I daresay, what a strong wish I have always entertained for your marriage with Agnes?"

"I am aware of it, uncle."

"You dear mother and myself have always been agreed upon this subject. I desired it years ago, and when, in a mysterious manner, your brief engagement to her came to an end, nobody regretted it more than I did, although, in our great grief about your father and our subsequent anxiety about your mother's health, the subject did not for the moment admit of much discussion. Of course, when you made up your differences with Agnes and again offered your hand to her, no one rejoiced more sincerely than myself."

After this preamble Lord Castlemere became suddenly silent, and appeared from some cause or other to be considerably embarrassed.

After some minutes, as Jack said nothing, he continued, although with evident effort :

" I believed her to be a good, pure-minded, honest-hearted girl, devoted to yourself. I say I *believed*, with intention, Jack, for to my deep sorrow, I believe it no longer."

" My dear uncle ! "—Jack sprang to his feet, flushed and angry—" I cannot listen to this."

" Have patience with me, Jack," said Lord Castlemere, stretching out a hand to his nephew across the table. " I have been staying in a house where I became an unwilling listener to a conversation not intended for my ears. Miss Verinder was discussed. The ladies who mentioned her spoke of her with scorn and contempt, lightly — as no good woman should be spoken of—they said that she has as good as been engaged for some years to a certain Major Hugh Lawley, with whom her name has been coupled—with dishonour—with infamy ! "

" I cannot allow you to say this," cried Jack ; " it is unworthy of you to have listened patiently to such cruel slander."

" My dear boy, I honour you for your indignation ; it is only what I anticipated ; but you wrong me. I did not listen patiently—my patience left me when I heard these ladies pitying *you—you*, my heir!—for being deceived by such a woman ! I burst from my retreat !—I confronted them—I dared them to prove their wicked words against my future daughter-in-law—and they answered, ' Ask the Duchess of St. Grail—she will tell you the sort of character which your son's betrothed bears in the world.' Jack, the duchess was my mother's bosom friend. She is the soul of honour, of goodness and of truth. I am on my way to London to ask her, and I will abide by her decision, for she is a woman who never listens to scandal. But of one thing I am determined—no woman whose name is not above the breath of suspicion shall ever, with my consent, become your wife. I shall withdraw my approval of the marriage."

There were a few minutes of painful silence. Jack had walked away to the window and stood looking out on the winter landscape, with his back to the room—he felt that he was at a crisis of his fate, yet, even at that moment—so strangely are the trifles

of life bound up with its sterner issues—he found time to notice that the sun was going down redly behind the bare woods in a pale and cloudless sky, and he said to himself, “It looks uncommonly like a frost coming on with that sky and a rising glass” Then he pulled himself together with an effort, and over his whole being there swept such a longing for Madge—for a breath of her sweetness and goodness, for the security with which a man turns to one whom he knows to be true and honest—as a refuge against all that is false and unhallowed—that for one moment it seemed to him that to take his uncle’s words as a loophole of escape, and ignobly to shuffle his own responsibilities upon his shoulders, would be, after all, the easiest and simplest course to pursue.

Suppose Lance should send him word that Madge yet lived ! Then, indeed, perforce, all must end between himself and Agnes, but, on the other hand, if, as most probable, it were true enough that she was dead, would not this fresh complication enable him to find yet another way whereby he might escape from a distasteful union with a woman he neither loved nor respected ?

But although he did not love her, something held him back from condemning her unheard, and from giving her up from self-interested motives. He had behaved so badly to Agnes in the past, that honour, as well as duty, bade him strain every point in her favour in the present.

He had strong notions of justice. To condemn a woman unheard upon a base and unsupported slander was repugnant to his nature. As a man of the present generation he was perhaps somewhat lacking in those high and punctilious old-world notions of woman’s sanctity which men of his uncle’s age and standing entertain. In Lord Castlemere’s eyes the merest breath against a woman’s honour was sufficient to tarnish it for ever. A woman who was not well spoken of by the whole world, even as his own mother had been, was, to him, unworthy altogether. But Jack knew very well that all these exalted standards have, in these latter days, considerably fallen from their first estate. A woman may be absolutely spotless in character, and yet be cruelly maligned and slandered by the senseless tongues of her idle fellow-women. Jack felt that he could not condemn her upon this. Agnes might be vain and

selfish, her nature might be coarse and venial, yet there might still be nothing against her to preclude him from making her his wife. She had possibly never cared for himself, nay, she had very probably flirted desperately with this other man—flirted injudiciously perhaps, and without much reticence in her words or actions—but still, for the mere folly of a girlish past he had no right to cancel his obligations towards her. He had never supposed her to be perfect—to find that she was faulty was therefore no great shock to him.

When he spoke at last to his uncle, he had made up his mind that he must stand by her.

"I think, he said, "that you will find that the Duchess of St. Grail will not give much credence to this slanderous story—she knows the world too well. But whether she does so or no, it can make no difference in my relations to Miss Verinder. Nothing but absolute proof of her guilt could justify me in breaking my engagement to her, and that, I imagine, these mischief-loving women who spoke ill of her, are scarcely prepared to supply. I have promised to marry Agnes, and I must keep my word. Her present conduct is at all events irreproachable. Into her past, I, of all men, have no right to pry. Towards me, at least, she has never behaved falsely."

Yet what he had heard of her, did not tend to increase his respect, nor yet to rekindle the feeble and flickering flame of his affection. The look-out of his future was indeed dark !

Lord Castlemere was deeply disturbed ; he secretly made up his mind to question his friend the Duchess—yet he saw that it was too late to break off the match. The conviction also that it was mainly his own doing, and that between them, he and Lady Mary had made a mess of Jack's future, did not tend either to soothe his ruffled spirits.

"If I had not been so keen about an heir!" he said to himself with bitter self-reproach, "if I had only let the boy alone to choose a wife for himself——!"

Who knows how many thorny roads of life are not sprinkled by those hopeless words, "if only!"

"My boy," he said presently with a deep emotion, "you could not be dearer to me if you were my own son. I wanted to see you happy with a wife and children of your own before I died—I wanted too—God forgive my pride!—to be certain that the old

name would not become extinct, and now perhaps I am to be punished. I would give my right hand, gladly, sooner than that your married life should be unhappy. Reflect, I entreat you, before it is too late, it would be better for you to marry a dairy-maid who was good and true and honest—than to tie yourself to one whom you may discover when it is too late to be false and unworthy."

Jack made no reply. He grasped his uncle's hand in silence and, in the bitterness of a great remorse, he thought of Madge!

The door opened, the footman brought in the evening letters upon a silver tray.

There was a letter from Agnes amongst them—a letter trivial as it was—which filled him with rage. He crushed it up in his hand with an angry hopelessness and thrust it deep down into his pocket.

On the top of what they had been speaking of, there was a horrible pathos about that letter.

His honour, his good name, his future, had hung in the balance whilst Agnes wrote with a very passion of earnestness about a coveted jewel !

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

#### THE PEARL NECKLACE.

"Now will I show myself to have more of the serpent than the dove ; that is, more knave than fool"—

—CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

IN the strong room at Castle Regis, together with the title deeds of the estates, the will of the present Lord, and sundry other interesting family papers, there was kept a certain necklace, which from time immemorial had been regarded with an almost superstitious veneration, by many generations of the Castlemere family.

It consisted of three rows of oriental pearls, of large size and of extreme beauty, fastened together by an antique gold clasp, in which was set one huge and magnificent ruby of absolutely priceless value.

This necklace had been worn in turn by many successive Ladies Castlemere. In the picture gallery it figured about the necks of the wives of the Lords of Castlemere. It was painted

in a certain very beautiful and well authenticated portrait by Vandyke, and reappeared again in a no less valuable picture by Gainsborough.

How the necklace came into the family was never satisfactorily accounted for, although it was said to have been brought from the East at the time of the second Crusade, but there existed a very ancient tradition concerning it, to the effect that if it were ever worn, even for a moment, by any other save by the reigning Lady Castlemere, sundry disasters and calamities would inevitably befall the persons and estates of the Castlemeres.

This prophecy, in well-nigh illegible old characters traced upon a parchment that was yellow with age, was kept in the same case with the jewel amongst the rest of the family archives, and was respected and devoutly believed in, even in these latter days of practical and common-sense incredulity. During the life of the present Lord the necklace, as he was unmarried, had never been worn, but was kept immured in its strong case, whence it was occasionally taken to be exhibited to some visitor at the Castle who might have expressed any interest in it and any desire to behold it.

In this manner it came, not unnaturally, to be shown to Agnes Verinder, in fact, Lord Castlemere himself had taken her up into the strong room and had lifted it out of its case in order to display it to her.

She was allowed to take it into her hands and to admire it to her heart's content, but not to clasp it about her neck or even to twist it about her wrist, lest, as he told her smilingly, evil should therefrom accrue to her future husband's property.

There are many old English families in which heirlooms with similar strange traditions attached to them, are still religiously preserved, whilst the conditions under which they are held are most rigidly maintained and in many cases firmly believed in, in spite both of reason and of common sense, and of the rapid onward march of nineteenth century science and intelligence.

The fact of the matter being, that a belief in the supernatural is so deeply implanted in the human mind—so essentially an instinct of our nature—that not all the blazing lights of science and of education have been able wholly to exterminate it from our innermost hearts.

It lurks in hidden corners, or springs up again and again in strange and unforeseen places, often where we should least have expected to come across it. So that there arises at length in the minds of those who are wise, a doubt as to whether this inherent element of man's being can ever be entirely blotted out from amongst us; whether indeed it may not be undesirable to smother it, and whether, above all, there are not things in Heaven and in Earth which man's philosophy and man's intellect will never be able to fully understand and to account for.

In some persons however this subtle sense of a superstitious veneration seems certainly to be altogether left out. These are the materialists of the world, to whom life and its issues is nothing but a well-poised machine of levers and of cog-wheels, and to whom the gratification of the senses, no less than that of the mental faculties, are the only rational realities of existence.

In such minds the imaginative and artistic faculties have little or no place, and naturally the incomprehensible and the unknown also only bring to them a sense of impatience and of irritation.

Agnes Verinder for instance regarded the venerable traditions of the Castlemere necklace with the utmost scorn and contempt.

She could not understand how sensible persons like Lord Castlemere and Lady Mary and Jack could possibly have any respect for such a ridiculous old story. She was angry with the folly as she considered it, which stood betwixt her and the gratification of her wishes.

She loved jewellery with all the passion of a vain and covetous nature, and when Lord Castlemere showed the treasure to her, she was loud in her expressions of admiration of the beautiful necklace with its milk-white rows of exquisite pearls and the flashing fire of its monster ruby. Moreover, she longed with her whole soul to possess it for her own.

Afterwards, in talking of it to Jack, she expressed to him in strong language her great desire to wear it, and he had laughingly said to her :

"And so you will, my dear, one of these days, when the dear old man is gone to his rest, and you have become Lady Castlemere, but I hope you won't be able to wear it yet awhile."

"Of course I don't want your uncle to die," she had answered,

"but I do think it foolish to keep up that stupid superstition ! What possible difference could it make to him or to anybody if I were to wear it as soon as I am married ?"

"Stupid or no—it is a superstition which every Lord of Castlemere has religiously adhered to, and which my uncle would never think of setting aside. You will have to wait for your necklace, Agnes, until you are the reigning queen, and, as the saying is, to 'rough it' on my grandmother's diamonds in the meantime !"

No more had been said between them on the subject at the time. But Agnes often went up into the picture gallery whilst she was staying at Castle Regis, in order to feast her eyes upon the different family portraits in which the wonderful necklace was reproduced ; there arose in her ill-governed mind a strong and greedy longing to possess this priceless treasure now that she was in the prime of her womanly beauty ; and she experienced a dull anger at the folly of keeping it from her under lock and key for perhaps another ten or twelve years, when maybe the beautiful throat and bosom which would so well set it off to-day should have lost something perhaps of its present fairness.

With the perversity of human nature, the mere fact that this jewel was denied to her made her desire to possess it the greater. Not all the beauty of the family diamonds which were to be purposely re-set for her, nor the many lovely modern trinkets which her friends and relations were about to present to her, could suffice to console her for the lack of this one thing which she was forbidden to possess.

It was therefore no wonder perhaps that Jack was seriously annoyed to receive a long letter from her, in which, with the most passionate entreaties and prayers, she implored him to move his uncle's resolution so that she might be permitted to wear the famous pearl necklace—at least on her wedding-day.

She represented to him that her toilette would be incomplete without it, that the descriptions of her costume in the Society papers would be lacking in their crowning feature, that all her friends thought her a fool not to get hold of it, and that her own heart was set upon it more than anything else on earth.

She adjured him by his affection and his troth—things she had cared little about hitherto—not to deny to her this one

great wish of her soul, and to do his utmost to persuade his uncle to allow her to wear it.

"He will do anything on earth for you, Jack," she wrote. "So I know that if you really put your whole mind to it that you will be able to get it for me."

Jack read all this again for the second time in the train, as he and his uncle were journeying Londonwards the following day.

There was a slight frown upon his forehead as he scanned the closely-written pages; her elaborate arguments failed entirely to move him, and when he had finished the letter he glanced up at his uncle who was sitting opposite to him.

Lord Castlemere had been reading the paper, but he had laid it aside now, and to Jack's fancy he looked worried and anxious. Agnes could not have pitched upon a worse moment in which to urge an unpalatable request upon him. The old man's mind was full of suspicions and of doubts about her, his good opinion of her had been rudely shaken, and he was beginning to realize that, in spite of his friendship for Sir Herbert and his desire to unite the Deep Deane acres to the Castle Regis estates, he had possibly made a great mistake in fostering the marriage of his dearly loved nephew—his dear Mary's boy—with this handsome but perhaps unprincipled heiress. He was one of those men whose faith in others remains blind and unreasoning, until once it has been shaken, but who then will never believe in them at all any more. Agnes had fallen from her pinnacle. She might not, indeed, be all that he feared, but, at any rate, her name had been lightly spoken of, and, for that reason alone, she was no longer worthy to be Jack's wife, or the mother of Jack's son.

He might be harsh, unjust even, in his judgments, but that was how he regarded the matter. He could not blind himself to the fact that Jack was possibly in honour bound to marry her all the same, but the marriage no longer gave him any pleasure to contemplate, and if any way could, even now at the eleventh hour, be found whereby his nephew might creditably withdraw from it, Lord Castlemere would be unfeignedly glad of it.

Jack, watching that pucker of trouble upon his uncle's forehead, folded up the letter again, and returned it to his pocket. He would not add to the old man's worries, or increase his ill opinion of Agnes, by mentioning the subject to him at all. He

knew that he would never grant her request, and to ask such a thing would only anger him.

Privately, Jack thought that the mere fact of her suggesting it, even to himself, was in the worst possible taste.

He would tell her when he saw her that it was impossible, and that she must think of it no more.

Then Lord Castlemere turned round to him, and, more for the sake of avoiding any uncomfortable allusion to Agnes than from any interest he took in the subject, asked him if his mother had told him about the little *protégé* she had picked up in the street.

"She did tell me of it in her last letter—some child that was nearly run over, I think she said, and that she carried home with her. Has she mentioned it again to you, uncle?"

"Yes, the boy is still with her. She has not found his parents yet; she talks of keeping him."

"Of keeping him altogether! What on earth will she do with him?"

"My dear boy, that is your mother's affair! I never, as you know, thwart any of her whims and fancies."

"But surely the care of a child, at her age, and with her delicate health, will be too much for her! How old is the brat?"

"About three, I think she says, and a charming little boy."

"Still—to adopt a beggar's child, of whom she knows nothing, seems a terrible risk. It will entail a great deal of expense upon her, and who can tell, moreover, what vices may not be born in him? and what seeds of evil may not develop and flourish by-and-bye? He may bring her an infinity of future trouble."

Lord Castlemere only shrugged his shoulders and laughed slightly.

"Ah! that is all very well for you and I, Jack. But do you suppose a woman like your mother is likely to listen to arguments of that kind, when a helpless baby is thrown by chance into her arms? Good women, Jack, don't reason; they follow their hearts, and their hearts don't very often lead them far wrong. It is a good thing for this world, Jack, that the women aren't all as hard and calculating and practical as we men are—it's just that irresponsible, soft-hearted foolishness, those tender,

reasonless impulses in them, which, doubtless, are God given, and not of earth, which make them of such infinite value to the grosser-fibred men to whom they belong." And then he sighed, and looked away, for it came into his mind, all at once, that possibly Jack's experience of such women as he was thinking of, would never go beyond his own mother; his wife, for certain, would not be one of them!

"I shall not interfere with your mother's present fancy, my boy," he resumed presently. "She is bound to be right in what she is doing, and she is going to lose you, so why should we grudge her something fresh to love! She is clever, too; one can trust her not to do anything inconsiderately. I don't suppose the baby will turn out a thief or a murderer. She must see good in him already, or she wouldn't have taken to him."

When they reached the Midland terminus, the uncle and nephew separated. Lord Castlemere had bachelor quarters near Pall Mall, which he had always kept, for many years past, and to which he preferred to go, whilst Jack went to Hill Street to his mother's.

It was dark when he got to the house. The train was somewhat late, and the ladies had waited dinner for him. He rushed up to his room to change his attire with only a passing greeting to them both upon the staircase.

When he found himself sitting opposite to his betrothed at the dinner-table, he could not help being struck anew with her wonderful beauty. Agnes was dressed in a flowing tea-gown of a deep, tawny orange colour, with knots of lurid red amongst its folds. There was something oddly weird and fantastic about this garment. Under the lamp-light, as she stooped forward to speak to him, it seemed to be touched here and there with flecks of living flame, and her dark hair and splendid eyes stood out with an almost unearthly blackness in contrast with the strange, vivid colours. Always afterwards, in recalling that evening, he thought of her, clad from throat to feet in the sheen of that wonderful mixture of red and orange hues.

There was a glitter of excitement in Miss Verinder's eyes to-night; she was glad to see him; life with Lady Mary had been decorously dull, and she was somewhat tired of pretending to be good and amiable. Moreover, just of late, she was

conscious of having failed a little with her future mother-in-law. The episode of the child had annoyed her, the child himself did not attract her, and she was aware that Lady Mary considered her unloveable and unwomanly in the attitude she had at first taken up about him. She had endeavoured to counteract this unfavourable impression by an elaborate after-pretence of sympathy and interest, but it was only pretence, and Lady Mary had seen through it. For the first time, Jack's mother had her doubts about her, and Agnes felt out of touch with her.

Jack's arrival was a godsend to her; over Jack she flattered herself that her ascendancy was still absolute. She could do what she liked with him, twist him round her fingers. She meant to get that necklace out of him for her wedding-day; by fair means, if possible, but if not, then by foul means.

If Jack had only known what there was lying in the pocket of that tawny orange gown, or if he had only been there to see his beautiful Agnes' face as she had unlocked her dressing-casc that evening, and had taken from its secret drawer a paper that had lain in it safely for more than four whole years! Would he have eaten his dinner with so good an appetite? Would his eyes have rested so admiringly and approvingly upon her, as she bent smilingly to him across the flower-decked tablecloth? And would he have said to himself, as he watched her, with a reversion of feeling in her favour:

"After all, I have wronged her in my heart, and my uncle has done her an injustice! She may be foolish and vain, but she cannot have a bad nature with that face, and that smile, and those eyes!"

For the reigning influence of the hour was, as of old, always paramount with Jack, and he was as prone as ever to be turned from his preconceived judgments and decisions by the magnetic strength of every-day associations, which affected his heart rather than his head.

After dinner Lady Mary went upstairs to see her adopted boy in his nursery, and as Jack held open the door for her, he aughingly asked if he might be allowed to inspect "the new baby."

"To-morrow, you shall see him, my dear, not to-night; if he is awake he might be frightened at a stranger. You and Agnes must have plenty to talk about, I shall leave you together"

This was the opportunity for which Agnes had been waiting. As soon as the door had closed upon the older woman, Miss Verinder cried, eagerly :

"Well, Jack, what success ?"

She had thrown herself into a low arm-chair drawn straight up in front of the hearthrug ; her head was tilted back upon scarlet cushions of Eastern embroidery ; her beautiful face was upturned towards him as he stood above her, leaning against the mantelpiece. "A symphony in red and orange"—a modern painter would have called her. Somehow, to Jack, in spite of her glorious beauty, the idea that she resembled a wild animal, thrust itself into his mind. There was something panther-like about her ; something cruel and stealthy and cunning. There were gleams of hidden fire in her splendid eyes, and the sneer of a treacherous smile upon the carmine of her lips.

"What success ?" she repeated impatiently, seeing that he only looked at her and did not answer.

Now of course Jack knew perfectly well what she meant, but as he was an invertebrate animal, *i.e.*, a man deficient in moral pluck, he replied feebly enough :

"Oh, how do you mean ? What kind of success ?"

She tapped her foot impatiently upon the carpet.

"Pray don't pretend ignorance, Jack, it's so stupid ! You know that I am alluding to the necklace."

"The pearl necklace ?" repeated Jack uncomfortably, as though particularising its nature helped him somehow out of his difficulty. Miss Verinder contemptuously disregarded the subterfuge.

"What does your uncle say ? Have you gained him over ? Will he let me have it ?"

It was astonishing how easy it had seemed to him in the train, and how difficult it was now ! Would she spring at him ? Would she show her claws and her teeth, his beautiful panther ? How ludicrously the horrible simile kept on twisting itself into the situation ! If a veritable wild animal had arisen snarling from the luminous red gold of her draperies, and had confronted him with its fierce and wicked face, Jack felt he would scarcely have been surprised !

There was a brief silence. Jack held out his patent leather

pumps deliberately one after the other to the fire, with his face turned away from her.

"The fact is," he said, at length, "I don't know what my uncle says or thinks, because I have not asked him."

"Not asked him! What, not after my letter? After the way in which I entreated you to do so?"

"No. There was no need to ask him. Nothing on earth would induce him to grant you such a thing."

The ice once broken he found it easier to go on—his courage and his strength came back to him.

"*You*—could make him grant my request if you chose," she answered in a low, steady voice; "there is nothing Lord Castlemere will not do for you—nothing on earth!"

"It is an improper request," cried Jack, with some anger. "You have no business to make it. I shall not be your mouth-piece. Ask him yourself, and see what he will say."

"Of course that is ridiculous! He would never do it for me—although he might very probably for you. Look here, Jack, don't be such a coward; do this thing for my sake. I have set my heart upon it; surely you cannot deny me so trifling a thing when I ask it of you!" She rose from her seat and wound her hands round his arm, leaning against him with a little caressing *abandon* in her attitude; her voice was gentle and conciliatory, and her eyes were full of tenderness. She was giving him his last chance. "It is not too late, Jack, go and see him to-morrow morning and ask him."

Jack shook her off angrily and impatiently.

"I will not, once for all! You have no business to ask for that necklace—you know what he, as well as I, think about it, and in what light we regard it. Do you suppose that, to gratify the mere whim of a vain and foolish woman, we should for one moment consent to trample upon all that our forefathers have held sacred? Let me hear no more of this, Agnes. I cannot go with you in this matter, and I do not intend to speak of it to my uncle."

Her colour rose, her face grew angry and rigid whilst he spoke. Her hand slipped swiftly into the pocket of her dress and grasped the hidden paper convulsively.

"You will not? that is your answer! Think again, Jack. I

assure you you will be sorry for it. It will be the worse for you if you do not."

"I do not know what you mean, nor with what you are threatening me—but if I thought about it from now till Doomsday, I should still give you the same answer. I shall not mention the necklace to my uncle."

He tossed away the hand that lay upon his arm, and flung himself down into a chair, gnawing angrily at the corner of his moustache.

Agnes stood for a second where he had left her, looking at him. She was pale now, and there was a certain concentration in her eyes and in the lines of her mouth, which, as he did not lift his head, he could not see. Slowly she drew forth the letter out of the folds of her orange draperies, and held it in both hands.

"Then, my friend," she said, slowly and deliberately, "I am afraid I must make you."

He made a gesture of contempt and anger.

"Do you recognise this letter, Jack?" she said, and thrust the paper she held suddenly towards him, taking care not to loosen her hold upon it.

Jack's eyes fell upon it—vaguely at first, but after a second with a startled eagerness; he recognised his own handwriting—his own words—the words in which he had striven to break the ice of their coming parting to his new-made wife, and had entreated her to meet him on the morrow at Fairley Junction! The lines danced before his eyes, the room seemed to go round with him—he tried to snatch the letter from her hands, but she was too quick for him, and whisked it away behind her back, with a short peal of mocking laughter.

He sprang to his feet and faced her furiously.

"How did you get that letter? how did you get it? By God, if you don't speak the truth, I will kill you!"

"My dear Jack, pray calm yourself——"

"Speak at once!" he repeated wildly.

"Give me time to speak then! You sent me the letter yourself!"

"I sent it you? It is a lie!"

"Fie! what an uncivil word to a lady!—but it is not a lie, but the truth. You posted the letter, I suppose, and the postman delivered it duly in Hans Place. See, here is the

envelope, which you are at liberty to examine as much as you please."

He took it from her hand and looked at it bewilderedly. His memory was a chaos, he passed his hand vaguely over his head—it was his own handwriting—he had written that address—how did that letter get into it? He could remember nothing!

Only out of the darkness of his mind one thing awoke with a startling reality.

"That letter was not intended for you."

"I am quite aware of it, Jack."

"And yet you kept it—you have kept it all this time!"

"Certainly. Wherefore should I not keep it?"

"And—the other letter—the letter that was meant for you—where did that go?"

She laughed a cruel little laugh of mockery.

"Oh—that went, I imagine, to the lady to whom you were anxious to make a 'regular allowance'; it's very simple, Jack! a case of wrong envelopes! It happens oftener in this world than you may suppose—it was not at all an original mistake, my poor boy—it has been done hundreds of times, only not always with such amusing results!"

He turned away from her with a groan. What had he written in that other letter which his Madge must have received?—the letter which—oh, wretched man that he was!—must have broken her heart!

He could not recall the cruel words, yet he remembered the gist of it well enough—well enough! It might well indeed have killed her.

"Now then, Jack, my dear, be sensible," said the cool voice of his betrothed, breaking in upon the agony of his miserable remorse. "If you do not exert your influence to get me that necklace, I am going to lay that letter before your good uncle, who has so high an opinion of you, and your pure-minded mother, who believes you to be a saint upon earth! I don't think they will appreciate it, either of them!"

"You are a devil, Agnes!—"

"Jack, my dear, spare me your bad language—it is in bad taste, and it will not make me break off my engagement to you, because it suits me to marry you. I cannot, you see, be thrown over a *second* time! So don't let us have any hard words. I

am sure you will be sensible. You would not care for that little past episode to become known to your people?"

"Do your worst," he answered gloomily. "You cannot injure the dead."

He sank into a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

Agnes stood for a moment watching him with a curious smile of triumph.

"I shall give you till to-morrow to think it over," she said presently. "I am quite willing to meet you half-way and to be amiable. If you do as I wish we can easily burn this letter together to-morrow, and then we shall not injure either the living or—*the dead*, as you say!"

There was a swish of satin draperies as they swept across the carpet—the soft closing of a door—and he was alone.

(To be concluded.)

# BELGRAVIA

*DECEMBER, 1890.*

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## April's Lady.

BY MRS. HUNGERFORD,

Author of "MOLLY BAWN," "PHYLLIS," "A LIFE'S REMORSE," etc.

### CHAPTER LI.

" While bloomed the magic flowers we scarcely knew  
The gold was there. But now their petals strew  
Life's pathway."  
• • • •  
" And yet the flowers were fair  
Fed by youth's dew and love's enchanted air."

THE cool evening air beating on Joyce's flushed cheeks calms her as she sets out for the walk that Barbara had encouraged her to take. It is an evening of great beauty. Earth, sea and sky seem blended in one great soft mist that, rising from the ocean down below, floats up to Heaven, its heart a pale, vague pink.

The day is almost done, and already shadows are growing round trees and corners. There is something mystical and strange in the deep murmurs that come from the nesting woods. The wild sweet coo of the pigeons, the chirping of innumerable songsters, and now and then the dull hooting of some blinking owl. Through all, the sad tolling of a chapel bell, away, away in

the distance, where the tiny village hangs over the brow of the rocks that gird the sea.

" While yet the woods were hardly more than brown,  
    Filled with the stillness of the dying day,  
    The folds, and farms, and faint green pastures lay  
And bells chimed softly from the grey-walled town.  
    The dark fields with the corn and poppies sown,  
    The dark, delicious dreamy forest way,  
    The hope of April for the soul of May,  
On all of these night's wide soft wings swept down."

Well, it isn't night yet, however. She can see to tread her way among the short young grasses down to a favourite nook of hers, where musical sounds of running streams may be heard, and the rustlings of growing leaves make songs above one's head. Here and there she goes through brambly ways, where amorous arms from blackberry bushes strive to catch and hold her, and where star-eyed daisies and butter-cups, and delicate faint-hearted primroses, peep out to laugh at her discomfiture. But she escapes from all their snares, and goes on her way, her heart so full of troubrous fancies that their many wiles gain from her not so much as one passing thought.

The pretty, lovely May is just bursting into bloom. Its pink blossoms here, and its white blossoms there, mingle gloriously, and the perfume of it fills the silent air.

Joyce picks a branch or two as she goes on her way, and thrusts them into the bosom of her gown.

And now she has reached the outskirts of the wood, where the river runs, crossed by a rustic bridge, on which she has ever loved to rest and dream, leaning rounded arms upon the wooden railings, and seeing strange, but sweet things in the bright hurrying water beneath her eyes.

She has gained the bridge, and leaning languidly upon its frail ramparts, lets her gaze wander afield. The little stream, full of conversation as ever, flows on unnoticed by her. Its charm seems dead. *That* belonged to the old life, the life she will never know again. It seems to her quite a long time since she felt *young*, and yet only a few short months have flown since she was young as the best of them, when even Tommy did not seem altogether despicable as a companion, and she had often been guilty of finding pleasure in running a race with him, and covering him, not only with confusion, but armfuls of scented

hay when at last she had gained the victory over him, and had turned from the appointed goal to overwhelm the enemy with merry sarcasms.

Oh, yes, that was all over—all done. An end must come to everything, and to her lightheartedness an end had come very soon. *Too* soon, she was inclined to believe in an access of self-pity, until she remembered that life was always to be taken seriously, and that she had deliberately trifled with it, seeking only the very heart of it—the gaiety, the carelessness, the ease.

Well, her punishment has come. She has learned that life is a failure after all. It takes some people a lifetime to discover that great fact, it has taken her quite a short time. Nothing is of much consequence, and yet—

She sighs and looks round her. Her eyes fall upon a distant bank of cloud overhanging a pretty farmstead, and throwing into bold relief the big rick of hay that stands at the western side of it. A huge black crow standing on the top of this, is flapping his wings and calling loudly to his mate. Presently he spreads his wings, and with a creaking of them like the noise of a sail in a light wind, disappears over her head. She has followed his movements with a sort of lazy curiosity, and now she knows that he will return in an hour or so with thousands of his brethren, darkening the heavens as they pass to their night's lodging in the tall elm trees.

It is good to be a bird. No care, no trouble, no *pain*! A short life and a merry one. Better than a long life and a sorry one. Yes, the world is all sorrow.

She turns her eyes impatiently away from the fast-vanishing crow, and now they fall upon a perfect wilderness of daffodils that are growing on the edge of the bank a little way down. How beautiful they are! Their soft, delicate heads nod lazily this way and that. They seem the very embodiment of graceful drowsiness. Some lines, lately read, recur to her, and awake within her memory.

" I wandered lonely as a cloud,  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A crowd of golden daffodils,  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

They seem so full of lazy joy of unutterable rapture that they

belie her belief in the falseness of all things. There must surely be some good in a world that grows such charming things—things almost sentient. And the trees swaying above her head, and dropping their branches into the stream, is there no delight to be got out of *them*? The tenderness of this soft, sweet wood in which perpetual twilight reigns, enters into her and soothes the sad demon that is torturing her breast. Tears rise to her eyes : she leans still farther over the parapet, and drawing the pink and white hawthorn blossoms from her bosom, drops them one by one into the hasty little river, and lets it bear them away upon its bosom to tiny bays unknown. Tears follow them, falling from her drooping lids. Can neither daffodils, nor birds, nor trees, give her some little of their joy to chase this sorrow from her heart?

Her soul seems to fling itself outward in an appeal to Nature, and Nature, that kind mother of us all, responds to the un-spoken cry.

A step upon the bridge behind her ! She starts into a more upright position, and looks round her without much interest.

A dark figure is advancing towards her. Through the growing twilight it seems abnormally large and black, and Joyce stares at it anxiously. Not Freddy, not one of the labourers ; *they*—the latter—would be all clad in flannel jackets of a light colour.

"Oh! is it *you*?" says Dysart, coming closer to her. He had however, known it was she from the first moment his eyes rested on her. No mist, no twilight, could have deceived him for

"Lovers' eyes are sharp to see.  
And lovers' ears in hearing."

"Yes," says she, advancing a little towards him and giving him her hand. A cold little hand, and reluctant.

"I was coming down to Mrs. Monkton with a message—a letter—from Lady Baltimore."

"This is a very long way round from The Court, isn't it?" says she.

"Yes; but I like this calm little corner. I have come often to it, lately."

Miss Kavanagh lets her eyes wander to the stream down below. To *this* little spot, of all places ! Her favourite nook !

Had he hoped to meet her there? Oh *no*; impossible! And besides, she has given it up for a long, long time, until this evening. It seems weeks to her now since last she was here.

"You will find Barbara at home," says she, gently.

"I don't suppose it is of very much consequence," returns he, alluding to the message. He is looking at her, though her averted face leaves him little to study.

"You are cold," says he, abruptly.

"Am I?" turning to him with a little smile. "I don't *feel* cold. I feel dull, perhaps, but nothing else."

And, in truth, if she had substituted the word unhappy for dull, she would have been nearer the mark. The coming of Dysart thus suddenly into the midst of her mournful reverie has but served to accentuate the reality of it. A terrific sense of *loneliness* is oppressing her. All things have their place in this world, yet where is *hers*? Of what account is she to anyone? Barbara loves her; yes, but not so well as Freddy or the children. Oh, to be *first* with someone!

"I find no Spring, while Spring is well-nigh blown.  
I find no nest, while nests are in the grove;  
Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells alone,  
My heart that breaketh for a little love."

Christina Rosetti's mournful words seem to suit her. Involuntarily she lifts her heavy eyes, tired by the day's weeping, and looks at Dysart.

"You have been crying," says he abruptly.

## CHAPTER LII.

" My love has sworn with sealing kiss  
 With me to live—to die ;  
 I have at last my nameless bliss,  
 As I love—loved am I."

THERE is a pause. It threatens to be an everlasting one, as Miss Kavanagh plainly doesn't know what to say. He can see this. What he cannot see is that she is afraid of her own voice. Those troublesome tears that all day have been so close to her, seem closer than ever now.

" Beauclerk came down to see you to-day," says he, presently. This remark is so unexpected that it steadies her.

" Yes," she says, calmly enough, but without raising the tell-tale eyes.

" You expected him ? "

" No." Monosyllables alone seem possible to her ; so great is her fear that she will give way and finally disgrace herself, that she forgets to resent the magisterial tone he has adopted.

" He asked you to marry him, however ? " There is something almost threatening in his tone now, as if he is defying her to deny his assertion. It overwhelms her.

" Yes," she says again, and for the first time is struck by the wretched meagreness of her replies.

" Well ? " says Dysart, roughly. But this time not even the desolate monosyllable rewards the keenness of his examination. " Well ? " says he again, going closer to her, and resting his hand on the wooden rail against which she too is leaning. He is so close to her now, that it is impossible to escape his scrutiny. " What am I to understand by that ? Tell me how you have decided." Getting no answer to this either, he says impatiently, " Tell me, Joyce."

" I refused him," says she at last, in a low tone, and in a dull sort of way, as if the matter is one of indifference to her.

"Ah!" He draws a long breath. "It is true?" he says, laying his hand on hers as it lies on the top of the woodwork.

"Quite so."

"And yet—you have been crying?"

"You can see that," says she petulantly. "You have taken pains to see, and to tell me of it. Do you think it is a pleasant thing to be told? *Most* people," glancing angrily towards him—"everyone, I think, makes it a point now-a-days, *not* to see when one has been making a fool of oneself, but *you* seem to take a delight in torturing me."

"Did it," says he bitterly, ignoring, perhaps not even hearing, her outburst. "Did it cost you so much to refuse him?"

"It cost me nothing!" with a sudden effort, and a flash from her beautiful eyes.

"Nothing?"

"I have said so. Nothing at all. It was mere nervousness, and because it reminded me of other things."

"Did he *see* you cry?" asks Dysart, tightening unconsciously his grasp upon her hand.

"No. He was gone a long time—*quite* a long time before it occurred to me that I should like to cry. I," with a frugal smile, "indulged myself very freely then, as you have seen."

Dysart draws a long breath of relief. It would have been intolerable to him that Beauclerk should have known of her tears. He would not have understood them. He would have taken possession of them as it were. They would have merely helped to pamper his self-conceit, and smoothe down his ruffled pride. He would inevitably have placed such and such a construction on them—one entirely to his own glorification.

"I shall leave you now with a lighter heart," says Felix presently. "Now that I know you are not going to marry that fellow."

"You *are* going, then?" says she sharply, checking the monotonous little tattoo she has been playing on the bridge rail as though suddenly smitten into stone. She had heard he was going; she had been told of it by several people, but somehow she had not believed it. It had never come home to her until now.

"Yes. We are under orders for India; we sail in about a month. I shall have to leave here almost immediately."

"So soon," says she vaguely. She has begun that absurd tattoo again, but bridge, and restless little fingers, and sky and earth, and all things seem blotted out. He is going. *Really* going; and for ever! How far is India away?

"It is always rather hurried at last. For my part I am glad I'm going."

"Yes?"

"Mrs. Monkton will—at least I am sure she will—let me have a line now and then to let me know how you—how you are all getting on. I was going to ask her about it this evening. You think she will be good enough?"

"Barbara is always kind."

"I suppose—" he hesitates, and then goes on with an effort. "I suppose it would be too much to ask of you—"

"What?"

"That you would sometimes write me a letter—however short."

"I am a bad correspondent," says she, feeling as if she is choking.

"Ah! I see. I should not have asked, of course. Yes, you are right. It was absurd my hoping for it."

"When people choose to go away so far as that—" she is compelling herself to speak, but her voice sounds to herself a long way off.

"They must hope for nothing better than to be forgotten. Out of sight, out of mind,' I know—it is such an *old* proverb. Well. . . . You are cold," says he suddenly, noting the pallor of the girl's face. "Whatever you were before, you are certainly chilled to the bone now. You *look* it. Come! This is no time of year to be lingering out of doors without a coat or hat.

"I have this shawl," says she, pointing to the soft, white fleecy thing that covers her.

"I distrust it. Come."

"No," says she faintly. "Go on you. Give your message to Barbara. As for me, I shall be happier here."

"Where I am not," says he with a bitter laugh. "I suppose I ought to be accustomed to that thought now, but such is my conceit that it seems ever a fresh shock to me. Well, for all that," persuasively, "come in. The evening is very cold. I

shan't like to go away leaving you behind me suffering from a bad cough or something of that kind. We *have* been friends, Joyce," with a rather sorry smile. "For the sake of the old friendship, don't send me adrift with such an anxiety upon my mind."

"Would you really care?" says she.

"Ah! that is the humour of it," says he. "In spite of all, I should still really care!—come." He makes an effort to unclasp the small pretty fingers that are grasping the rails so rigidly. At first they seem to resist his gentle pressure, and then they give way to him. She turns suddenly.

"Felix!" her voice is somewhat strained, somewhat harsh; not at all her own voice. "Do you still love me?"

"You know that," returns he sadly. If he has felt any surprise at the question, he has not shewn it.

"No, no," says she feverishly. "That you *like* me, that you are fond of me, perhaps, I can still believe. But is it the same with you that it used to be? Do you," with a little sob, "*love* me as well now as in those old days? *Just* the same? Not," going nearer to him and laying her hand upon his breast, and raising agonized eyes of enquiry to his, "not one bit less?"

"I love you a thousand times more," says he, very quietly, but with such intensity that it enters into her very soul. "Why?" He has laid his own hand over the small nervous one lying on his breast, and his face has grown very white.

"Because—I *love you too!*"

She stops short here and begins to tremble violently. With a little, shamed, heart-broken gesture she tears her hand out of his and covers her face from his sight.

"Say that again!" says he hoarsely. He waits a moment, but when no word comes from her, he deliberately drags away the sheltering hands and compels her to look at him.

"Say it," says he, in a tone that now is almost a command.

"Oh! it is true—*true!*" cries she vehemently. "I love you, I have loved you a long time, I think, but I didn't know it. Oh, Felix! Dear, *dear* Felix, forgive me!"

"Forgive you?" says he brokenly.

"Ah, yes. And don't leave me. If you go away from me I shall die! There has been so *much* of it—a little more, and—" She breaks down.

"My beloved," says he in a faint, quick way. He is holding her to him now with all his might. She can feel the quick pulsations of his heart. Suddenly she slips her soft arms around his neck, and now with her head pressed against his shoulder, bursts into a storm of tears. It is a last shower.

They are both silent for a long time, and then he, raising one of her hands, presses the palm against his lips. Looking up at him, she smiles, uncertainly but happily, a very rainbow of a smile born of sunshine and raindrops gone. It seems to beautify her lips. But Felix, whilst acknowledging its charm cannot smile back at her. It is all too strange, too new. He is *afraia* to believe. As yet there is something terrible to him in this happiness that has fallen into his life.

"You mean it?" he asks, bending over her. "If to-morrow I were to wake and find all this an idle dream, how would it be with me then? *Say* you mean it."

"Am I not here?" says she tremulously, making a slight but eloquent pressure on one of the arms that are round her. He bends his face to hers, and as he feels that first glad, eager, kiss returned—he *knows!*

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### CHAPTER LIII.

"True love's the gift which God has given  
To man alone beneath the heaven :

• • • •

It is the secret sympathy,  
The silver link, the silken tie,  
Which heart to heart and mind to mind  
In body and in soul can bind."

OF course Barbara is delighted. She proves charming as a confidante. Nothing can exceed the depth of her sympathy.

When Joyce and Felix come in together in the darkening twilight, entering the house in a burglarious fashion through the dining-room window, it so happens that Barbara is there, and is at once struck by a sense of guilt that seems to surround and envelop them. They had not indeed anticipated meeting Barbara in that room of all others, and are rather taken aback when they come face to face with her.

"I assure you we have not come after the spoons," says Felix in a would-be careless tone that could not have deceived an infant, and with a laugh so *frightfully* careless that it would have terrified the life out of you.

"You certainly don't look *like* it," says Mrs. Monkton whose heart has begun to beat high with hope. She hardly knows whether it is better to fall upon their necks forthwith and declare she knows all about it, or else to pretend ignorance. She decides upon the latter as being the easier. After all they mightn't like the neck process, most people have a fancy for telling their own tales. To have them told for one is annoying. "You haven't the requisite murderous expression," she says, unable to resist a touch of satire. "You look rather frightened you two. What have you been doing?" She is too good-natured not to give them an opening for their confession.

"Not much, and yet a great deal," says Felix; he has advanced a little, whilst Joyce, on the contrary, has meanly receded farther into the background. She has rather the appearance indeed of one who, if the wall *could* have been induced to give way, would gladly have followed it into the garden. The wall, however, declines to budge. "As for burglary," goes on Felix, trying to be gay, and succeeding villainously, "you must exonerate your sister at all events. But I—I confess I have stolen something belonging to you."

"Oh, no, not *stolen*," says Joyce, in a rather faint tone. "Barbara, I know what you will think—but—"

"I know what I *do* think!" cries Barbara, joyously. "Oh! is it, *can* it be true?"

It never occurs to her that Felix now is not altogether a brilliant match for a sister with a fortune. She remembers only in that lovely mind of hers, that he had loved Joyce when she was without a penny, and that he is now, what he had always seemed to her, the one man who could make Joyce happy.

"Yes. It is true," says Dysart. He has given up that unsuccessful gaiety now, and has grown very grave. There is even a slight tremble in his voice. He comes up to Mrs. Monkton and takes both her hands. "She has given herself to me. You are *really* glad? You are not angry about it? I know I am not good enough for her, but—"

Here Joyce gives way to a little outburst of mirth that is rather tremulous, and coming away from the unfriendly wall that has not been of the least use to her, brings herself somewhat shamefacedly into the only light the room receives through the western window. The twilight at all events is kind to her. It is difficult to see her face.

"I really can't stay here," says she, "and listen to my own praises being sung. And besides," turning to Felix a lovely, but embarrassed face, "Barbara will not regard it as you do. She will, on the contrary, say you are a great deal too good for me, and that I ought to be pilloried for all the trouble I have given you through not being able to make up my own mind for so long a time."

"Indeed I shall say nothing but that you are the dearest girl in the world, and that I'm delighted things have turned out so well. I always *said* it would be like this!" cries Barbara exultantly, who certainly never *had* said it, and had always indeed been distinctly doubtful about it.

"Is Mr. Monkton in," says Felix, in a way that leads Monkton's wife to imagine that if she should chance to say he was out the news would be hailed with rapture.

"Oh, never mind *him*," says she, beaming upon the happy but awkward couple before her. "I'll tell him all about it. He will be just as glad as I am. There, go away you two; you will find the small parlour empty, and I daresay you have a great deal to say to each other still. Of course you will dine with us, Felix, and give Freddy an opportunity of saying something ridiculous to you."

"Thank you," says Dysart warmly. "I suppose I can write a line to my cousin explaining matters."

"Of course. Joyce, take some writing things into the small parlour, and call for a lamp as you go."

She is smiling at Joyce as she speaks, and now, going up to her, kisses her impulsively. Joyce returns the caress with fervour. It is natural that she should never have felt the sweetness, the *comfort* of Barbara, so entirely as she does now, when her heart is open, and full of ecstasy, and when sympathy seems so necessary. *Darling* Barbara! But then she must love Felix now just as much as she loves her. She rather electrifies Barbara and Felix by saying anxiously to the former:

"Kiss Felix too!"

It is impossible not to laugh! Mrs. Monkton gives way to immediate and unrestrained mirth, and Dysart follows suit.

"It is a command," says he, and Barbara thereupon kisses him affectionately.

"Well, now I have got a brother at last," says she. It is indeed her first knowledge of one, for that poor suicide in Nice had never been anything to her—or to anyone else in the world for the matter of that—except a great trouble. "There, go!" says she. "I think I hear Freddy coming."

They fly. They both feel that further explanations are beyond them just at present, and as for Barbara, she is quite determined that no one but she shall let Freddy into the all-important secret.

She is now fully convinced in her own mind that she had always had special prescience of this affair; and the devouring desire we all have to say "*I told you how 'twould be,*" to our unfortunate fellow-travellers through this vale of tears, whether the cause for the hateful reminder be for weal or woe, is strong upon her.

She goes to the window, and seeing Monkton some way off, flings up the sash, and waves to him in a frenzied fashion to come to her *at once*. There is something that almost approaches tragedy in her air and gesture. Monkton hastens to obey it.

"Now—what—what—*what* do you think has happened?" cries she, when he has vaulted the window-sill and is standing beside her somewhat breathless and distinctly uneasy. Nothing short of an accident to the children could in *his* opinion have warranted so vehement a call. Yet Barbara, as he examines her features carefully, seems all joyous excitement. After a short contemplation of her beaming face, he tells himself he was an ass to give up that pilgrimage of his to the lower field, where he had been going to inspect a new-born calf.

"The skies are all right," says he, with an upward glance at them through the window. "And—you hadn't *another* Uncle, had you?"

"Oh! Freddy," said she, very justly disgusted.

"Well, my good child, *what* then? I'm all curiosity."

"Guess," says she, too happy to be able to give him the round scolding he deserves.

"Oh! If it's a riddle," says he, "you might remember I am only a little one, and unequal to the great things of life!"

"Ah! but Freddy, I've something delicious to tell you. There, sit down there—you look quite queer—whilst I——"

"No wonder I do," says he at last, rather wrathfully. "To judge by your wild gesticulations at the window just now, anyone might have imagined that the house was on fire, and a hostile race tearing *en masse* into the backyard! And now! Why it appears you are quite *pleased* about something or other! Really such disappointments are enough to age a man—or make him look 'queer.' That was the word you used, I think?"

"Listen!" says she, seating herself beside him, and slipping her arm round his neck. "Joyce is going to marry Felix—*after all!* There!" Still with her arm holding him, she leans back a little to mark the effect of this astonishing disclosure.

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#### CHAPTER LIV.

"Well said; that was laid on with a trowel."

"Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice."

"AFTER all, indeed. You may well say that," says Mr. Monkton with indignation. "If those two idiots meant matrimony all along, why on earth didn't they do it before? See what a lot of time they've lost, and what a disgraceful amount of trouble they have given all round."

"Yes. Yes, of course. But then you see, Freddy, it takes some time to make up one's mind about such an important matter as that."

"It didn't take *you* long," says Mr. Monkton most unwisely.

"It took me a great deal longer than it took *you*," replies his wife with dignity. "You have always said that it was the very first day you ever saw me—and I'm sure it took me quite a week."

This lucid speech she delivers with some severity.

"More shame for you," says Monkton promptly.

"Well, never mind," says she, too happy and too engrossed with her news to enjoy even a skirmish with her husband. "Isn't it all charming, Freddy?"

"It has certainly turned out very well, all things considered."

"I think it is the happiest thing. And when two people who love each other are *quite* young—"

"Really, my dear, you are too flattering," says Monkton. "Considering the grey hairs that are beginning to make themselves so unpleasantly at home in my head, I, at all events, can hardly lay claim to extreme youth."

"Good gracious! I'm not talking of *us*, I'm talking of *them*," cries she, giving him a shake. "Wake up, Freddy. Bring your mind to bear upon this big news of mine, and you will see how enchanting it is. *Don't* you think Felix has behaved beautifully, so faithful—*so* constant—and against such terrible odds. You know, Joyce *is* a little difficult sometimes! Now *hasn't* he been perfect all through?"

"He is a genuine Hero of Romance," says Mr. Monkton with conviction. "None of your cheap articles—a regular *bonâ-fide* thirteenth-century knight. The country ought to contribute its stray halfpennies and buy him a pedestal and put him on the top of it, whether he likes it or not. Once there, Simon Stylites would be forgotten in half-an-hour. Was there ever before heard of such a heroic case? Did ever yet living man have the prowess to propose to the girl he loved? It is an entirely new departure, and should be noticed. It is quite unique."

"Don't be horrid," says his wife. "You know exactly what I mean—that it is a delightful ending to what promised to be a miserable muddle. And he *is* so charming—isn't he now, Freddy?"

"*Is* he?" asks Mr. Monkton, regarding her with a thoughtful eye.

"You can see for yourself. He is so *satisfactory*. I always said he was the very husband for Joyce. He is so kind, so earnest, so sweet in every way."

"*Nearly* as sweet as I am, eh?" There is stern enquiry now in his regard.

"Pouf! I know what *you* are of course. Who would, if I wouldn't? But really, Freddy, *don't* you think he will make her an ideal husband? So open, so frank? So free from everything—everything—oh well, everything—*you* know."

"I don't," says Monkton uncompromisingly.

"Well—everything hateful—I mean. Oh! She is a lucky girl!"

"*Nearly* as lucky as her sister," says Monkton, growing momentarily more stern in his determination to uphold his own cause.

"Don't be absurd! I declare," with a little burst of amusement, "when he—they—told me about it, I never felt so happy in my life."

"Except when you married *me*." He throws quite a tragical expression into his face, that is, however, lost upon her.

"Of course, with her present fortune she might have made what the world would call a more distinguished match. But his family is unexceptionable, and he has *some* money; not much I know, but still, some. And even if he hadn't, she has now enough for both. After all," with noble disregard of the necessities of life. "*What* is money?"

"Dross! mere dross!" says Mr. Monkton.

"And he is just the sort of man not to give a thought to it."

"He couldn't, my dear. Heroes of Romance are quite above all that sort of thing."

"Well, *he* is, certainly," says Mrs. Monkton, a little offended. "You may go on pretending as much as you like, Freddy, but I know you think about him just as I do. He is exactly the sort of charming character to make Joyce happy."

"Nearly as happy as I have made *you*!" says her husband severely.

"Dear me, Freddy, I really *do* wish you would try and forget yourself for one moment!"

"I *might* be able to do that, my dear, if I were quite sure that *you* were not forgetting me too!"

"Oh! as to *that*! I declare you are a perfect baby! You love teasing. Well—*there* then!" The "*there*" represents a kiss, and Mr. Monkton, having graciously accepted this tribute to his charms, condescends to come down from his mental elevation, and discuss the new engagement, with considerable affability. Once indeed, there is a dangerous lapse back into his old style, but this time there seems to be some occasion for it.

"When they stood there stammering and stuttering, Freddy,

and looking so awfully silly, I declare I was so glad about it that I actually kissed him!"

"What?" says Mr. Monkton. "And you have lived to tell the tale? You have therefore lived too long. Perfidious woman, prepare for death!"

"I declare I think *you'd* have done it," says Barbara eloquently.. Whereupon, having reconsidered her speech, they both give way to mirth.

"I'll try it when I see him," says Monkton. "Even a Hero of Romance couldn't object to a chaste salute from me."

"He is coming to dinner. I hope when you do see him, Freddy,"—anxiously this—"you will be very sober about it."

"Barbara! You know I *never* get—er—that is—not *before* dinner at all events."

"Well, but promise me now, you will be very serious about it. They are taking it very seriously, and they won't like it if you persist in treating it as a jest."

"I'll be a perfect judge."

"I know what *that* means," indignantly. "That you are going to be as frivolous as possible."

"My dear girl! If the Bench could only hear you. Well, there then! Yes, *really*! I'll be everything of the most desirable. A regular funeral mute. And," seeing she is still offended, "I *am* glad about it, Barbara. Honestly pleased. I think him as good a fellow as I know, and Joyce another."

Having convinced her of his good faith in the matter, and agreed with her on every single point, and so far perjured himself as to, remember perfectly and accurately the everyday and hour on which three months ago, she had said that she *knew* Joyce preferred Felix to Beauclerk, he is forgiven, and presently allowed to depart in peace with another "*There*" even warmer than the first.

But it is unquestionable that she keeps a severe eye on him all through dinner, and so forbids any trifling with the sacred topic. It would have put the poor things out so! she has said to herself. And indeed it must be confessed that the lovers are very shy and uncomfortable, and that conversation drifts a good deal, and is only carried on regularly by fits and starts. But later, when Felix has unburdened his mind to Monkton during the quarter of an hour over their wine— when Barbara has been

compelled in fear and trembling to leave Freddy to his own devices—things grow more genial, and the extreme happiness that dwells in the lovers' hearts is given full play. There is even a delightful half-hour granted them upon the balcony, Barbara having—like the good angel she is—declared that the night is almost warm enough for June.

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## CHAPTER LV.

"Great discontents there are, and many murmurs."

"There is a kind of mournful eloquence  
In thy dumb grief."

LADY BALTIMORE too had been very pleased by the news, when Felix told her next morning of his good luck. In all her own great unhappiness she had still a kindly word and thought for her cousin and his *fiancée*.

"One of the *nicest* girls," she says, pressing his hands warmly. "I often think indeed *the* nicest girl I know. You are fortunate, Felix, but," very kindly, "she is fortunate too."

"Oh! no. The luck is all on my side," says he.

"It will be a blow to Norman," she says presently.

"I think not," with an irrepressible touch of scorn. "There is Miss Maliphant."

"You mean that he can 'decline' upon her. Of course, I can quite understand that you do not like him," says she with a quick sigh. "But believe me, any heart he has was really given to Joyce. Well! he must devote himself to ambition now."

"Miss Maliphant can help him to that."

"No. No. That is all knocked on the head. It appears—this is in strict confidence, Felix—but it appears he asked her to marry him last evening and she refused."

Felix turns to her as if to give utterance to some vehement words, and then checks himself. After all, why add to her unhappiness? Why tell her of that cur's baseness? Her own brother too! It would be but another grief to her.

To think he should have gone from *her* to Miss Maliphant!

What a pitiful creature. Beneath contempt. Well! if his pride survives those two downfalls, both in one day, it must be made of leather. It does Felix good to think of how Miss Maliphant must have worded *her* refusal! She is not famous for grace of speech. He must have had a real bad time of it. Of course Joyce had told him of her interview with the sturdy heiress.

"Ah! she refused?" says he, hardly knowing what to say.

"Yes. And not very graciously, I'm afraid. He gave me the mere fact of the refusal—no more—and only that because he had to give a reason for his abrupt departure. You know he is going this evening?"

"No, I did not know it. Of course, under the circumstances—"

"Yes; he could hardly stay here. Margaret came to me and said *she* would go, but I would not allow that. After all, every woman has a right to refuse or accept as she wills."

"True."

His heart gives an exultant leap as he remembers how *his* love had willed.

"I only wish she had not hurt him in the refusal. But I could see he was wounded. He was not in his usual careless spirits. He struck me as being a little—well—you know—a little—"

She hesitates.

"Out of temper?" suggests Felix, involuntarily.

"Well—yes. Disappointment takes that course with some people. After all, it might have been worse if he had set his heart on Joyce and been refused."

"Much worse," said Felix, his eyes on the ground.

"*She* would have been a severe loss."

"Severe, indeed."

By this time Felix is beginning to feel like an advanced hypocrite.

"As for Margaret Maliphant, I am afraid he was more concerned about the loss of her bonds and scrips than of herself. It is a terrible world, Felix, when all is told," says she, suddenly crossing her beautiful, long, white hands over her knees and leaning towards him. There is a touch of misery so sharp in her voice that he starts as he looks at her. It is a momentary fit of emotion, however, and passes before he dare comment on it. With a

heart nigh to breaking she still retains her composure and talks calmly to Felix, and lets him talk to her as though the fact that she is soon to lose for ever the man who once had gained her heart—that fatal once that means for always—in spite of everything that has come and gone—is as little or nothing to her. Seeing her sitting there, strangely pale, indeed, but so collected, it would be impossible to guess at the tempest of passion and grief and terror that reigns within her breast. Women are not so strong to endure as men, and therefore, in the world's storms suffer most.

"It is a lovely world," says he, smiling, thinking of Joyce; and then, remembering her sad lot, his smile fades. "One might make, perhaps, a bad world better," he says, stammering.

"Ah! Teach me how!" says she, with a melancholy glance.

"There is such a thing as forgiveness! *Forgive him!*" blurts he out in a frightened sort of way. He is horrified at himself—at his own temerity—a second later, and rises to his feet as if to meet the indignation he has certainly courted. But to his surprise no such indignation betrays itself.

"Is that your advice?" says she, still with the thin white hands clasped over the knee, and the earnest gaze on his. "Well, well, well!"

Her eyes droop. She seems to be thinking; and he, gazing at her, refrains from speech with his heart sad with pity. Presently she lifts her head and looks at him.

"There; go back to your love," she says, with a glance that thrills him. "Tell her from me that if you had the whole world to choose from, I should still elect *her* as your wife. I like her—I love her! There—*go!*"

She seems to grow all at once very tired. Are those tears that are rising in her eyes? She holds out to him her hand.

Felix, taking it, holds it closely for a moment, and presently, as if moved to do it, he stoops and presses a warm kiss upon it.

She is so unhappy, and so kind, and so true. God deliver her out of her sorrows!

## CHAPTER LVI.

"I would that I were low laid in my grave."

SHE is still sitting silent, lost in thought after Felix's departure when the door opens once again to admit her husband.

His hands are full of papers.

"Are you at liberty?" says he. "Have you a moment? These"—pointing to the papers—"want signing. Can you give your attention to them now?"

"What are they?" asks she, rising.

"Mere law papers. You need not look so terrified." His tone is bitter. "There are certain matters that must be arranged before my departure—matters that concern your welfare, and the boy's. Here," laying the papers upon the davenport and spreading them out, "you sign your name here."

"But"—recoiling—"what is it? What does it all mean?"

"It is not your death warrant, I assure you," says he, with a sneer. "Come, sign!" Seeing her still hesitate, he turns upon her savagely; who shall say what hidden storms of grief and regret lie within that burst of anger.

"Do you want your son to live and die a poor man?" says he. "And there is yourself to be considered too. Once I am out of your way, you will be able to begin life again with a light heart; and this"—tapping the papers heavily—"will enable you to do it. I make over to you and the boy everything—at least, as nearly everything as will enable me to live."

"It should be the other way," says she. "*Take* everything, and leave us enough on which to live."

"Why?" says he, facing round; something in her voice that resembles remorse striking him.

"*We* shall have each other," says she, faintly.

"Having happily got rid of such useless lumber as the father and husband! Well, you will be the happier so," rejoins he with a laugh that hurts *him* more than it hurts her, though she cannot

know that. "Two is company, you know, according to the good old proverb, three, trumpery. You and he will get on very well without me, no doubt."

"It is your arrangement," says she.

"If that thought is a salve to your conscience, pray think so," rejoins he. "It isn't worth an argument. We are only wasting time."

He hands her the pen. She takes it mechanically, but makes no use of it.

"You will at least tell me where you are going?" says she.

"Certainly I should if I only knew myself. To America first; but that is a big direction, and I am afraid the tenderest love-letter would not reach me through it. When your friends ask you, say I have gone to the North Pole. It is as likely a destination as another."

"But not to *know!*" says she, lifting her dark eyes to his—dark eyes that seem to glow like fire in her white face, "that would be terrible. It is unfair; you should think—think——"

Her voice grows husky and uncertain. She stops abruptly.

"Don't be uneasy about that," says he. "I shall take care that my death, when it occurs, is made known to you as soon as possible. Your mind shall be relieved on that score with as little delay as I can manage. The welcome news shall be conveyed to you by a swift messenger."

She flings the pen upon the writing-table and turns away.

"Insult me to the last, if you will," she says, but consider your son. He loves you. He will desire news of you from time to time. It is *impossible* that you can put him out of your life as you have put me."

"It appears *you* can be unjust to the last," says he, flinging her own accusation back at her. "Have I put you out of my life?"

"Ah! was I ever in it?" says she. "But—you will write?"

"No; not a line. Once for all, I break with you. Should my death occur, you will hear of it. And I have arranged so that now and after that event you and the boy will have your positions clearly defined. That is all you can possibly require

of me. Even if you marry again, your jointure will be secured to you."

"Baltimore!" exclaims she, turning upon him passionately. She seems to struggle with herself for words. "Has marriage proved so sweet a thing," cries she presently, "that I should care to try it again. There; go! I shall sign none of these things." She makes a disdainful gesture towards the loose papers lying on the table, and moves angrily away.

"You have your son to consider."

"Your son will inherit the title and the property without those papers."

"There are complications, however, that, perhaps, you do not understand."

"Let them lie then. I shall sign nothing."

"In that case you will probably find yourself immersed in troubles of the meaner kinds after my departure. The child cannot inherit until after my death, and——"

"I don't care," sullenly. "Go, if you will. I refuse to benefit by it."

"What a stubborn woman you are," cries he, in great wrath. "You have for years declined to acknowledge me as your husband. You have, by your manner, almost *demanded* my absence from your side. Yet now, when I bring you the joyful news that in a short time you will actually be rid of me, you throw a thousand difficulties in my path. Is it that you desire to keep me near you for the purposes of torture? It is too late for that. You have gone a trifle too far. The hope you have so clearly expressed in many ways, that time would take me out of your path, is at last about to be fulfilled."

"I have had no such hope."

"No? You can look me in the face and say that? Saintly lips never lie, do they? Well, I'm sick of this life, if you are not. I have borne a good deal from you, as I told you before. I'll bear no more. I give in. Fate has been too strong for me."

"You have created your own Fate."

"*You* are my Fate! You are inexorable. There is no reason why I should stay."

Here the sound of running, childish, pattering footsteps can be heard outside the door, and a merry little shout of laughter.

The door is suddenly burst open in rather unconventional style and Bertie rushes into the apartment, a fox terrier at his heels. The dog is evidently quite as up to the game as the boy, and both race tempestuously up the room and precipitate themselves against Lady Baltimore's skirts. Round and round her the chase continues, until the boy, bursting away from his mother, dashes towards his father, the terrier after him.

There isn't so much scope for talent in a pair of trousers as in a mass of dainty petticoats, and, presently Bertie, growing tired, flings himself down upon the ground and lets the dog tumble over him there. The joust is virtually at an end.

Lady Baltimore, who has stood immovable during the attack upon her, always with that cold, white, stricken look upon her face, now points to the beautiful child lying panting, laughing, playing with the dog, at his father's feet.

"*There is a reason,*" says she, almost inaudibly.

Baltimore shakes his head.

"I have thought all that out. It is not enough," says he.

"Bertie," says his mother wildly, turning to the child. "Do you know this—that your father is going to leave you?"

"Going?" says the boy vaguely, forgetting the dog for a moment, and glancing upwards. "Where?"

"Away. For ever."

"Where?" says the boy again. He rises to his feet now and looks anxiously at his father. Then he smiles and flings himself into his arms. "Oh, no," says he, in a little, soft, happy, *sure* sort of way.

"For ever! For ever!" repeats Isabel, in a curious monotone.

"Take me up," says the child, tugging at his father's arms. "What does mama mean? Where are you going?"

"To America, to shoot bears," returns Baltimore, with an embarrassed laugh. How near to tears it is.

"Real *live* bears?"

"Yes."

"Take me with you," says the child, excitedly.

"And leave mama?"

"Oh, she'll come too," says Bertie confidently. "She'll come where I go." Where *he* would go—the child; but would *she* go where the father went? Baltimore's brow darkens.

"I am afraid it is out of the question," he says, putting Bertie

back again upon the carpet, where the fox-terrier is barking furiously, and jumping up and down in a frenzied fashion, as if desirous of devouring the child's calves. "The bears might eat you. When you are big, and strong——"

"You will come back for me?" cries Bertie, eagerly.

"Perhaps."

"He will not," breaks in Lady Baltimore violently. "He will come back no more. When he goes you will never see him again. He has said so. He is going *for ever*." These last two terrible words seem to have sunk into her soul. She cannot cease from repeating them.

"Let the boy alone," says Baltimore angrily.

The child is looking from one parent to the other. He seems puzzled, expectant, but scarcely unhappy. Childhood can grasp a great deal, but not all. The more unhappy the childhood the more it can understand of the sadder and larger ways of life. But children delicately brought up and clothed in love from the cradle, find it hard to realize that an end to their happiness can ever come.

"Tell me, papa," says he at last, in a vague, sweet little way.

"What is there to tell?" replies his father, with a most meagre laugh, "except that I saw Beecher bringing in some fresh oranges, half-an-hour ago. Perhaps he hasn't eaten them all yet. If you were to ask him for one——"

"I'll find him," cries Bertie brightly, forgetting everything but the present moment. "Come, Trixy, come," to his dog. "You shall have some too."

"You see there won't be much trouble with him," says Baltimore, when the boy has run out of the room in pursuit of oranges. "It will take him a day, perhaps, and after that—he will be quite your own. If you won't sign these papers to-day, you will, perhaps, to-morrow. I had better go and tell Hansard that you would like to have a little time to look them over."

He walks quietly down the room, opens the door, and closes it after him.

## CHAPTER LVII.

" This is that happy morn,  
   That day, long-wish'd day  
   Of all my life so dark,  
   (If cruel stars have not my ruin sworn,  
     And fates my hopes betray),  
   Which, purely white, deserves  
   An everlasting diamond should it mark."

HE has not, however, gone three yards down the corridor, when the door is again opened and Lady Baltimore's voice calls after him.

*" Baltimore ! "* Her tone is sharp, high, agonized. The tone of one strung to the highest pitch of despair. It startles him. He turns to look at her. She is standing, framed in by the doorway, and one hand is grasping the woodwork with a hold so firm that the knuckles are shining white. With the other hand she beckons him to approach her. He obeys her. He is even so frightened at the strange, grey look in her face, that he draws her bodily into the room again, shutting the door with a pressure of the hand he can best spare.

" What is it ? " says he, looking down at her.

She has managed to so far overcome the faintness that has been threatening her, as to shake him off and stand free, leaning against a chair behind her.

" Don't go," says she hoarsely.

It is impossible to misunderstand her meaning. It has nothing whatever to do with his interview with the lawyer waiting so patiently down below, but with that wider wandering of his into regions unknown. She is as white as death.

" How is this, Isabel ? " asks he. He is as colourless as she is now. " Do you know what you are saying ? This is a moment of excitement—you do not comprehend what your words mean."

" Stay ! Stay for *his* sake ! "

" Is that all ? " says he, his eyes searching hers.

" *For mine, then !*"

The words seem to scorch her. She covers her face with her hands and stands before him, stricken, dumb, miserable—confessed.

"For yours!"

He goes closer to her and ventures to take her hand. It is cold; cold as death. His is burning.

"You have given a reason for my staying, indeed," says he "But what is the meaning of it?"

"This," cries she, throwing up her head, and showing him her shamed and grief-stricken face. "I am a coward! In spite of everything I would not have you go—*so far*."

"I see. I understand." He sighs heavily. "And yet that story was a foul lie. It is all that stands between us, Isabel—is it not so? But you will not believe."

There is a long silence, during which neither of them stir. They seem wrapt in thought, in silence, he still holding her hand.

"If it was a lie," says she at last, breaking the quiet round them by an effort. "If it was, would you so far forgive my distrust of you, as to be holding my hand like this?"

"Yes. What is there I would not forgive you," says he. "And it was a lie!"

"Cyril," cries she in great agitation, "take care! It is a last moment! Do you dare to tell me that still? Supposing *your* story to be true, and mine—that woman's—false, how would it be between us then?"

"As it was in the first good old time when we were married."

"You could forgive the wrong I have done you all these years? Supposing——"

"Everything. All."

"Ah!" This sound seems crushed out of her. She steps backwards and a dry sob breaks from her.

"What is it?" asks he quickly.

"Oh, that I could, that I *dared* believe," says she.

"You would have proofs," says he coldly, resigning her hand. "My word is not enough. You *might* love me, did I prove worthy; your love otherwise is not strong enough to endure the pang of distrust. Was ever *real* love so poor a thing as that? However, you shall have them."

"What?" asks she, raising her head.

"The proofs you desire," responds he icily. "That woman—your friend—the immaculate one—died the day before yesterday. What? You never heard? And you and she——"

"She was nothing to me," says Lady Baltimore. "Nothing since——"

"The day she reviled me. And yet," with a most joyless laugh, "for the sake of a woman you cared so little about, that even now her death has not caused you a pang, you severed the tie that *should* have been the closest to you on earth. Well, she is dead; 'Heaven rest her soul,' as the peasants say. She wrote me a letter on her bed of death."

"Yes?" eagerly.

"You still doubt," says he with a stern glance at her. "So be it. You shall see the letter. Though how will that satisfy you? You can always gratify your desire for suspicion by regarding it as a forgery. The woman herself is dead, so of course there is no one to contradict. *Do* think this all out," says he, with a contemptuous laugh, "before you commit yourself to a fresh belief in me. You see I give you every chance. To such a veritable 'Thomas' in petticoats, every road should be laid open. Now," tauntingly, "will you wait here whilst I bring the proof?"

He is gazing at her in a heart-broken sort of way. *Is* it the end? Is it all really over? There had been a faint flicker of the dying candle—a tiny glare—and now—for all time is it to be darkness?

As for her; ever since he had let her hand go, she had stood with bent head looking at it. He had taken it—he had let it go. There seemed to be a promise of Heaven—was it a false one?

She is silent. And Baltimore, who had hoped for one word of trust, of belief, makes a gesture of despair.

"I will bring you the letter," he says, moving towards the door.

When he *does* bring it, when she has read it and satisfied herself of the loyalty so long doubted, where, he asks himself, will they two be then? Farther apart than ever! He has forgiven a great deal—much more than this—and yet, strange human nature, he knows if he now leaves the room and her presence, he will never return to her again.

The letter she will see, but him—*never!*

The door is opened. He has almost crossed the threshold. Once again her voice recalls him. Once again he looks back. She is holding out her arms to him.

"Cyril! Cyril!" cries she, "I believe you."

She staggers towards him. Mercifully the fountain of her tears breaks loose; she flings herself into his willing arms, and sobs out a whole world of grief upon his bosom.

It is a cruel moment, yet one fraught with joy as keen as the sorrow. A fire of anguish out of which both emerge purified, calmed, gladdened.

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## CHAPTER LVIII.

"Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come."

THE vague suspicion of rain that had filled their thoughts at breakfast has proved idle. The sun is shining forth again with redoubled vigour as if laughing their silly doubts to scorn. Never was there so fair a day. One can almost *see* the plants growing in the garden, and from every bough the nesting birds are singing loud songs of joy.

The meadows are showing a lovely green, and in the glades and uplands the

"Daffodils  
That come before the swallow dares."

are uprearing their lovely heads. The air is full of sweet scents and sounds, and Joyce, jumping down from the drawing-room window that lies close to the ground, looks gladly round her. Perhaps it is not so much the beauty of the scene as the warmth of happiness in her own heart that brings the smile to her lips and eyes.

*He* will be here to-day. Involuntarily she raises one hand and looks at the ring that encircles her engaged finger. A charming ring—of pearls and sapphires. It evidently brings her happy thoughts, as, after gazing at it for a moment or two, she stoops and presses her lips eagerly to it. It is his first gift (though not his last), and therefore the most precious. *What* girl does not like receiving a present from her lover? The least mercenary woman on earth must feel a glow at her heart

and a fonder recognition of her sweetheart's worth when he lays a love-offering at her feet.

Joyce, after her one act of devotion to *her* sweetheart, runs down the garden path, and towards the summer house. She is not expecting Dysart until the day has well grown into its afternoon ; but book in hand she has escaped from all possible visitors to spend a quiet hour in the old earwiggy shanty at the end of the garden, sure of finding herself safe there from interruptions.

The sequel proves the futility of all human belief.

Inside the summer-house, book in hand likewise, sits Mr. Browne, a picture of studious virtue.

Miss Kavanagh seeing him, stops dead short, so great is her surprise, and Mr. Browne, raising his eyes as if with a difficulty from the book on his knee, surveys her with a calmly judicial eye.

"Not here. Not here, my child," quotes he, incorrectly.  
"You had better try next door."

"Try for *what?*" demands she, indignantly.

"For *whom?* you mean."

"No, I don't," with increasing anger.

"Jocelyne," says Mr. Browne, severely, "when one forsakes the path of truth it is only to tread in—"

"Nonsense," says Miss Kavanagh, irreverently.

"As you will!" says he meekly. "But I assure you he is not here."

"I could have told *you* that," says she, colouring, however, very warmly. "I must say, Dicky, you are the most ingeniously stupid person I ever met in my life."

"To shine in even the smallest line in life is to achieve something," says Mr. Browne complacently. "And so you knew he wouldn't be here just now."

This is uttered in an insinuating tone. Miss Kavanagh feels she has made a false move. To give Dicky an inch is indeed to give him an ell.

"He? Who?" says she weakly.

"Don't descend to dissimulation, Jocelyne," advises he severely. "It is the surest road to ruin, if one is to believe the good old copy books. By he—you see *I* scorn subterfuge—I mean Dysart, the person to whom in a mistaken moment you have

affianced yourself, as though—I—I were not ready at any time to espouse you."

"I'm not going to be espoused," says Miss Kavanagh, half laughing.

"No? I quite understood——"

"I won't have *that* word," petulantly. "It sounds like something out of the dark ages."

"So does he," says Mr. Browne. "'*Felix*', you know, so Latin. Quite like one of the old monks. I shouldn't wonder if he turned out a——"

"I wish you wouldn't tease me, Dicky," says she. "You think you are amusing, you know, but I think you are one of the rudest people I ever met. I wish you would let me alone."

"Ah, why didn't you leave *me* alone?" says he with a sigh, that would have set a furnace ablaze. "However," with a noble determination to overcome his grief. "Let the past lie. You want to go and meet Dysart, isn't that it? And I'll go and meet him with you. Could self-sacrifice farther go? 'Jim along Josy,' no doubt he is at the upper gate by this time flying on the wings of love!"

"He is not," says Joyce, "and I wish once for all, Dicky, that you wouldn't call me 'Josy.' 'Jocelyne' is bad enough, but *Josy*. And I'm not going to 'Jim' anywhere, and certainly," with strong determination, "not with *you*." She looks at him with sudden curiosity. "What brought you here, to-day?" asks she, most inhospitably it must be confessed.

"What brings me here every day. To see the unkindest girl in the world."

"She doesn't live here," says Miss Kavanagh. "Dicky," changing her tone suddenly, and looking at him with earnest eyes. "What is this I hear about Lady Baltimore and her husband? Be sensible now, *do*, and tell me."

"They're going abroad together, with Bertie. They've made it up," says he, growing as sensible as even she can desire. "It is such a complete make-up all round, that they didn't even ask *me* to go with them. However, I'm determined to join them at Nice on their return from Egypt. Too much billing and cooing is bad for people."

"I'm so glad," says Joyce, her eyes filling with tears. "They

are two such dear people, and if it hadn't been for Lady——By-the-bye, where *is* Lady Swansdown?"

"Russia, I think."

"Well. I liked her too," says Joyce with a sigh, "but she wasn't good for Baltimore, was she?"

"Not very," says Mr. Browne drily. "I should say on the whole that she disagreed with him. Tonics are sometimes dangerous."

"I'm *so* delighted," says Joyce, still thinking of Lady Baltimore. "Well," smiling at him, "why don't you go in and see Barbara?"

"I *have* seen her—talked with her a long while, and bid her adieu. I was on my way back to The Court, having failed in my hope of seeing you, when I found this delightful nest of earwigs, and thought I'd stay and confabulate with them for a while in default of better companions."

"Poor Dicky!" says she, "come with me, then, and I'll talk to you for half-an-hour."

"Too late," says he, looking at his watch. "There is only one thing left me now to say to you, and that is 'Good-bye'!"

"Why this mad haste?"

"Ah, ha! *I* can have my little secrets, too," says he. "A whisper in your ear," leaning towards her.

"No, thank you," says she, waving him off with determination. "I remember your *last* whisper. There, if you can't stay, Dicky, good-bye, indeed. I'm going for a walk."

She turns away resolutely, leaving Mr. Browne to sink back upon the seat and continue his reading, or else to go and meet that secret he spoke of.

"I say," calls he, running after her, "you may as well see me as far as the gate, anyway."

It is evident the book, at least, has lost its charm. Miss Kavanagh, not being stony-hearted, so far gives in as to walk with him to a side gate, and, having finally bidden him adieu, goes back to the summer-house he has quitted, and opening *her* book, prepares to enjoy herself.

Vain preparation! It is plain that the Fates are against her to-day. She is no sooner seated, with her book of poetry open on her knee, than a little flying form turns the corner, and Tommy precipitates himself upon her.

"What are you doing?" asks he.

## CHAPTER LIX.

" Lips are so like flowers,  
I might snatch at those,  
redder than the rose-leaves,  
sweeter than the rose."

" Love is a great master."

" I AM reading," she says. " Can't you see that ? "

" Read to me, then," says Tommy, scrambling up on the bench beside her, and snuggling himself under her arm. " I love to hear people."

" Well, not this, at all events," says Miss Kavanagh, placing the dainty copy of " The Muses of Mayfair " she has been reading on the rustic table in front of her.

" Why not that one ? What is it ? " asks Tommy, staring at the book.

" Nothing you would like—horrid stuff—only poetry."

" What's poetry ? "

" Oh ! Nonsense, Tommy ! You know very well what poetry is. Your hymns are poetry."

This, she considers, will put an end to all desire for the book in question. It is a clever and a skilful move, but it fails signally. There is silence for a moment whilst Tommy cogitates, and then—

" Are *those* hymns ? " demands he, pointing at the discarded volume.

" N-o—not exactly."

This is scarcely ingenuous, and Miss Kavanagh has the grace to blush a little. She is the further discomposed in that she becomes aware, presently, that Tommy sees through her perfectly.

" Well, *what* are they ? " asks he.

" Oh—er—well—just poetry, you know."

" I don't ! " says Tommy, flatly, who is nothing if not painfully truthful, " let me hear them."

He pauses here, and regards her with a searching eye.

" They"—with careful forethought—" they aren't *lessons*, are they ? "

"No, they are not lessons," says his aunt, laughing. "But you won't like them, for all that. If you are athirst for literature, get me one of your own books, and I will read 'Jack the Giant Killer' to you."

"I'm *sick* of him," says Tommy, most ungratefully, that tremendous hero having filled up many an idle hour of his during his short lifetime. "No"—nestling closer to her—"go on with your *poetry* one."

"You would hate it. It is worse than Jack," says she.

"Let me hear it," says Tommy, persistently.

"Well," says Miss Kavanagh, with a sigh, "if you *will* have it, at least don't interrupt."

She has tried very hard to get rid of him; but, having failed in so signal a fashion, she gives herself up, with an admirable resignation, to the inevitable.

"What would I do that for?" asks Tommy, rather indignant.

"I don't know, I'm sure. But I thought I'd warn you," says she, wisely cautious. "Now, sit down there," pointing to the seat beside her, "and when you feel you have had enough of it, say so at once."

"That would be interrupting," says Tommy the Conscientious.

"Well, I give you leave to interrupt *so far*," says Joyce, glad to leave him a loophole that may ensure his departure before Felix comes, "but no farther—mind that."

"Oh! I'm minding," says Tommy, impatiently. "Go on. Why don't you begin?"

Miss Kavanagh, taking up her book once more, opens it at random. All its contents are sweetmeats of the prettiest, so she is not driven to a choice. She commences to read in a firm soft voice.

"The wind and the beam loved the rose,  
And the rose loved one:  
For who recks the——"

"What's that?" says Tommy.

"What's *what*?"

"You aren't reading it right, are you?"

"Certainly I am—why?"

"I don't believe a beam of wood could love *anything*!" says Tommy—"It's too heavy!"

"It doesn't mean a beam of *wood*."

"Doesn't it?" staring up into her face, "what's it mean, then?  
'The beam that is in thine own eye'?"

He is now examining "her own eye" with great interest. As usual, Tommy is strong in Bible lore.

"I have no beam in my eye, I hope," says Joyce, laughing, "and at all events, it doesn't mean that either, the poet who wrote this meant a *sunbeam*."

"Well, why couldn't he *say* so?" says Tommy, gruffly.

"I really think you had better bring me one of your own books," says Joyce. "I told you this would——"

"No," obstinately; "I like this. It sounds so nice and *smoothy*. Go on," says Tommy, giving her a nudge.

Joyce, with a sigh, reopens the volume, and gives herself up for lost. To argue with Tommy is always to know fatigue and nothing else. One never gains anything by it."

"Well, do be quiet now, and listen," says she, protesting faintly.

"I'm listening like *anything!*" says Tommy. And indeed now, at last, it seems as if he were.

So silent does he grow, as his aunt reads on, that you might have heard a mouse squeak. But for the low soft tones of Joyce no smallest sound breaks the sweet silence of the day. Miss Kavanagh is beginning to feel distinctly flattered. If one can captivate the flitting fancies of a child by one's eloquent rendering of charming verse, what may one *not* aspire to? There must be something in her style, if it can reduce a boy of seven to such a state of ecstatic attention, considering the subject is hardly such an one as would suit his tender years.

But Tommy was always thoughtful beyond his age. A dear, clever little fellow. So appreciative! Far, *far* beyond the average! He——

The mild sweetness of the spring afternoon, and her own thoughts, are broken in upon at this instant by the "dear, clever little fellow."

"He has just got to your waist now," says he, with an air of wild, subdued excitement.

"He! *Who?* *WHAT?*" shrieks Joyce, springing to her feet; a long acquaintance with Tommy has taught her to dread the worst.

"Oh, *there!* Of course you've knocked him down, and I *did*

want to see how high he would go. I was tickling his tail to make him hurry," says Tommy in an aggrieved tone. "I can't see him anywhere now," peering about on the ground at her feet.

"Oh! *what* was it, Tommy? *Do* speak!" cries Joyce in a frenzy of fear and disgust.

"'Twas an earwig," says Tommy, lifting a seraphic face to hers. "And such a *big* one! He was racing up your dress most beautifully, and now you've upset him. Poor thing! I don't believe he'll *ever* find his way back to you again."

"I should hope not indeed," says Miss Kavanagh hastily.

"He began at the very end of your frock," goes on Tommy, still searching diligently on the ground as if to find the earwig, with a view to restoring it to its lost hunting-ground; "and he wriggled up so *nicely*. I don't know *where* he is now," sorrowfully, "unless"—with a sudden brightening of his expressive face—"he is up your petticoats."

"Tommy! what a horrid *bad* boy you are," cries poor Joyce wildly. She gives a frantic shake to the petticoats in question. "Find him *at once*, sir! He *must* be somewhere down there. I shan't have an instant's peace until I know where he is."

"I can't see him anywhere," says Tommy; "maybe you'll *feel* him presently, and then we'll know. He isn't on your leg *now*—is he?"

"Oh! *Don't*," cries Joyce, who looks as if she is going to cry. She gives herself another vigorous shake, and stands away from the spot where Tommy evidently thinks the noxious beast in question *may* be, with her petticoats held carefully up in both hands. "Oh! Tommy *darling*! *Do* find him. He *can't* be up my petticoats, can he?"

"He can. There's *nothing* they can't do," says Tommy, who is plainly revelling in the storm he has raised. Her open fright is beer and skittles to him. "Why did you stir? He was as good as gold until then; and there wasn't anything to be afraid of. I was watching him. When he got to your *ear*, I'd have told you. I wouldn't like him to make you deaf—but I wanted to see if he *would* go to your ear. But you spoiled all my fun, and now—where is he now?" asks Tommy, with an awful suggestion in his tone.

"In the grass, perhaps! I don't feel him anywhere," says

Joyce miserably, looking round her everywhere, and even over her shoulder,

" Sometimes they stay quiet a long time, and then they crawl ! " says Tommy, the most horrible anticipation in his tone.

" Really, Tommy," cries his aunt indignantly, " I do think you are the most abominable boy I ever met in my life. There, go away ! I certainly shan't read another line to you—either now—or—ever ! "

" What is the matter ? " asks a voice at this moment, that sounds close to her elbow. She turns round with a start.

" It is you, Felix ! " says she colouring warmly. " It—oh ! it's nothing ! Only Tommy. And he said I had an earwig on me. And I was—just a little unnerved, you know."

" And no wonder," says her lover with delightful sympathy. " I can't bear that sort of wild animal myself. Tommy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. When you saw him, why didn't you rise up and slay the destroyer of your aunt's peace ? There ! run away into the hall. You will find on one of the tables a box of chocolate. I told Mabel it was there, perhaps she——"

Like an arrow from the bow Tommy departs.

" He has evidently his doubts of Mabel," says Joyce laughing rather nervously. She is still a little shy with Felix. " He doesn't trust her."

" No." He has seated himself, and now draws her down beside him. " You were reading ? " he says.

" Yes."

" To Tommy ? "

" Yes," laughing more naturally this time.

" Tommy is a more learned person than one would have supposed. Is *this* the sort of thing he likes ? " pointing to Nydia's exquisite song.

" I am afraid not. Though he would insist upon my reading it. The earwig was evidently a far more engrossing subject than either the wind or the rose."

" And yet——" He has his arm round her now and is reading the poem over her shoulder.

" *You are my rose,*" says he softly. " And you, do you love but one ? "

She makes a little mute gesture that might signify anything

or nothing to the uninitiated, but to him is instinct with a most happy meaning.

"Am I that one, darling?"

She makes the same little, silent movement again, but this time she adds to it by casting a swift glance upwards at him, from under her lowered lids.

"Make me *sure* of it," entreats he, almost in a whisper. He leans over her, lower, lower still. With a little, tremulous laugh, she raises her soft palm to his cheek, and tries to press him from her; but he holds her fast.

"*Make* me sure!" he says again. There is a last faint hesitation on her part, and then, their lips meet.

"I have doubted, always—always a *little*, even since that night down by the river," says he. "But now——"

"Oh, no! you must not doubt me again," says she with tears in her eyes.

THE END.

## Madame de Pompadour.

THALES, as he looked upwards to the stars, fell into the water. It was afterwards said that had he looked into the water he might have seen the stars, but looking to the stars he could not see the water !

Had M. Poisson, the father of Jeanne Antoinette, afterwards Marquise de Pompadour, striven to enrich his family by legitimate means, he would not perforce have fled his country. A gambler, and more frequently a loser than a gainer, his family was often reduced to sore straits when Monsieur permitted himself to indulge his pet vice.

Jeanne's father held the post of sous-chef in the commissariat department. His pots and pans represented *terra firma*, the gaming table, the troublous waters of debt, and the stars the ambition for pecuniary gain which was never to be gratified.

His constant losses led to defalcation. Embezzlement of some sort constrained him to fly his native land. In his absence he was tried and condemned to be executed, but was hung in effigy as he himself could not be traced.

Such was the brilliant and beautiful Madame de Pompadour's father, the woman who in due course of time took upon herself the duties of First Minister to France.

Of her mother little is said, but Soulavie's "Memoirs" open with the words :

*"Elevée par une mère corrompue pour corrompre un roi né religieux."*

We must receive this statement with caution, remembering that Louis "the well-beloved," was thirty-five at the least, in age, when he met the vivacious Jeanne, and had already proved himself to have been born anything rather than religious.

From the age of three years Mademoiselle seems to have had her ambitions—that is, if we are to accept current tradition.

Taken to see the marriage procession of the young King Louis XV. and his bride Marie Lecquiska, she resisted, we are told, with juvenile petulance, an attempt to withdraw her from

the window, exclaiming with tears, "*Je veux me marier et j'attends le roi!*"

"Ah! *Quel joli morceau de femme pour le roi!*" cried Madame Poisson, with laughter.

Every writer has his own theory as to the character and upbringing of Jeanne. Married between eighteen and nineteen, to the nephew of M. Tournehem, the patron of her family, she apparently felt none of the affection for her husband which he undoubtedly lavished upon her.

M. Tournehem not only had provided for the Poisson family, but gave Jeanne such an education as admitted her both before and after her marriage to the best literary salons.

He proposed at his death that she should inherit the half of his fortune, but his nephew meeting the charming *protégée*, fell in love with her, and arrangements were made for a speedy marriage.

One of the many events which celebrated the marriage of the Dauphin to the Infanta, Maria Theresa, was a ball, at which Jeanne, then Madame le Normand d'Etoiles, was present, unmasked. The King himself, disguised in the garb of a miller, imagined he was safe from recognition. Madame's husband had a château on the borders of the forest of Senart, where, during their residence she was accustomed to attend the Royal hunt. The "well-beloved" therefore was no stranger to Madame d'Etoiles when they met in the ball-room of the Hotel de Ville.

Her skill as a horsewoman was exceptional, and she was wont to don a riding-dress of the full bright blue known as *l'œil du roi*. Her hat of felt of the same colour was edged with gold, and further adorned by a waving white plume.

A costume so gay upon a presence so comely was a combination so effective that one feels small marvel that it caught the King's appreciative eye as he rode through the green glades of Senart.

However, the hunting parties came to an end, and Madame de Châteauroux carried her hero off again to the wars.

Madame Jeanne, however, determined not to be forgotten. She took the precaution of removing to Versailles and being presented at Court by the Princesse de Conti.

This lady, a scion of an ancient house, was not altogether free

from those harassments which seem to trouble and weigh down some of our own *grandes dames* now-a-days.

Madame the *parvenue* was as rich as Madame la Princesse was poor, and the matter was—well—arranged.

M. d'Etoiles regretted the brilliant entry of his beautiful wife upon the shoals and quicksands of a life at Court. But he had to submit.

Perhaps he felt with an ancient philosopher that lock and key will scarce keep that secure which pleases everybody.

“*Je le veux*,” said the Monarch.

“*Je le veux*,” said Madame.

But we anticipate. At the Hotel de Ville then it was, she again met the King, who, no doubt, recognised the graceful Diana of the hunting-field, imagining himself secure, however, in his disguise as a miller's man.

Jeanne was demure enough, and after a little lively badinage, in which she was noted as an adept, she rose to join the rest of the dancers. By design or not, as she did so she dropped her handkerchief.

Louis hesitated, then followed, and presented the handkerchief bowing low, and uttering a few words which reached those ears only for which they were meant.

Cried the maskers, taking advantage of the cover afforded them by their King's disguise and their own, to rally him, “*Le mouchoir est jeté ! Le mouchoir est jeté !*”

Somewhat discomfited, the King made a hasty exit, and exchanged the miller's dress for that of a Turk, which latter, on the whole, appears a disguise appropriate and not ill-chosen.

Next day all Paris and Versailles had canvassed this gracious act of Louis.

And indeed it made a fine theme for the *salons*.

M. d'Etoiles, as the scandal reached him, made his objections known loudly and early.

The only result was a polite invitation for him to travel.

Enraged, and thus exiled, it is a humiliating fact that later he had such small self-respect as to return and accept a position under the Court.

Solon, being asked why among his personal laws he had not framed one against personal affronts, replied he “could not believe the world so fantastical as to regard them.”

Possibly, M. d'Etoiles went late in life to the school of philosophy, and made this lesson of the ancient lawgiver his own.

Ere long, the King raised Madame d'Etoiles to the necessary rank for the ladies in waiting upon the Queen.

He conferred upon her the title of the extinct and noble house of De Pompadour. She assumed the family arms, and was dowered with a considerable portion of the estates.

After the elevation of Jeanne to so much notoriety the Court became more brilliant.

The change which society in France had been undergoing for some time received a fresh impetus.

The prestige of the *noblesse* declined, while the bourgeoisie rose rapidly in importance.

This was in part, however, owing to the fact that when Louis began to reign commerce was in a decayed condition.

Nursed and renewed under the clever administration of Fleury, and his policy of peace, the class in whose hands lay the wealth of France now claimed some consideration.

*“Après nous le déluge !”* Few, perhaps, of the volatile people whose country in 1722 produced one of the most fascinating women of a sensuous age, have paused to remember from whose lips those words first fell, which were so often repeated by her kingly lover, and now have passed into an epigram.

Perhaps the clear vision of the Marchioness looked ahead to that reign of terror, the seeds of which she, as one of the most luxurious livers in a luxurious reign, had helped to sow.

“The lightning is so closely at hand,” wrote Voltaire to M. de Chavelin, on the 2nd April, 1764, and only twelve days before the death of Madame de Pompadour, “that it will burst forth on the first opportunity and then there will be a fine uproar. The young are fortunate for they will see fine things.”

Madame de Pompadour's brother, who was four or five years her junior, was created at nineteen Marquis de Vaudières.

“*Le petit frère,*” both she and her King were wont to call Abel Francois Poisson in terms of affection.

It was to her the King entrusted the affairs of the State—to her he looked to enforce his views—that is, when he held any.

And honours poured in thick and fast upon the beautiful Pompadour.

On the feast of St. Jean she was raised to the rank of Duchess.

And yet—already regret mingled in the cup of pleasure—as potent in the days of the eighteenth century, as when Lucretius lived and wrote.

The bitter bubbled in every joyous draught for Jeanne. For in a letter addressed to the Comtesse de Noailles we know there are these saddened words, "The charm has vanished, I find nothing more in my heart than an immense void which nothing can fill."

Alas! like \*Sybilla, the garish world oft demands the most at a time when it holds least to offer.

Mental anxiety and bodily fatigue together, acting on a naturally delicate frame, threw her at length into a decline.

Long after she knew what needs must be her fate, she smiled upon her lover-King and endeavoured to conceal her sufferings.

She believed, indeed, that Louis would bear the news of her demise with stoical indifference, but would find her illness quite unbearable.

At last she retired to Choisy, but without her Louis felt ill at ease.

She must perforce return to Versailles, and there he watched with every appearance of concern the ravages of that deceptive malady, consumption.

Different days were these from those others, when Louis the well-beloved, yielded to the suggestion of his *belle Maitresse*, that he should kindle fresh vigour and valour in his troops, by showing himself at the head of his armies.

The gratifying reception he met with momentarily gratified Louis, although public ovations, as a rule, are known to have been rather distasteful to him.

Madame de Pompadour had emulated her predecessor, Madame de Châteauroux, and had obtained permission to join the King at the camp of the Maréchale de Saxe.

After forty-eight hours of the most intense anxiety, to Madame came the soul-cheering tidings of the victory of Fontenoy.

\* The Sybil who increased the price of the books she offered for sale to Tarquin the more she diminished their numbers.

Then her pallid cheek regained its colour, her pulses quickened, her heart beat with hope.

Bright gleams of triumph dispelled the darkling shadows of despondency.

"Saddle me White Surrey!" cried she.

She cannot wait while her cumbrous and magnificent carriage is made ready. Her King is there, and she will hie away to Fontenoy.

A wondrous meeting that of this Royal Mars with Venus under the trees of the forest of Barri.

Love and beauty. Victory and death. The King in the prime of life, bowing before her, his plumed casque in his hand, and the blush of gratified ambition mantling in her beauteous cheeks; the forest trees above them—and—there beyond upon the plain—grim death!

There, fourteen thousand men were slaughtered. The Duc de Grammont is brought nigh upon a litter, but expires ere he reaches his King, for whose commendation his dying lips fain would ask.

M. de Guesclin, his leg shattered by a spent ball, leans propped against a tree. She hastens to assist him, and to bind up his wounds with handkerchiefs and cambric from her dress.

A woman uniting in herself absence of nerves with warmth of sympathy and heart.

A sublime combination.

Well, well! it all was over. What was, as though it never had been.

The pretty pomp and display had past; Madame was *in extremis*, and her King turned sick nurse.

On the 15th of April, 1764, the duchess, then in her forty-second year, tranquilly breathed her last.

Evidently conscious that the final moment was arrived, she delayed, with outstretched hand, the priest who stayed beside her bed, reading.

Perceiving she had closed her eyes as though to rest, he was about to leave her, but, "*Attendez, mon père,*" said her clear, gentle voice, "*attendez, nous partirons ensemble.*"

A quarter of an hour later, and the King gazed upon the mortal remains of one of the most beautiful and fascinating women which Europe has known.

It is said by some that he evinced some faint emotion.

It is, in any case, more pleasant to give him credit for some sorrow, rather than to receive as truth the *on dit* of the day, which declared that the King, on seeing the funeral of Madame de Pompadour pass his window in a downpour of rain, made the ill-seasoned jest that the Marchioness had not good weather for her journey.

She was buried by the side of her daughter, in the chapel of the Convent of the Capucines, which was then in the Rue des Petits Champs, but which has since been destroyed.

We who in these days see in Regent Street shops silks and satins, pretty shoes and *articles de luxe* named after the beautiful Pompadour, give perhaps not one passing thought to the *petite bourgeoisie* who was to be raised to such alarming heights, and whose life should eventually become part of the history of *la belle France*.

Yet she adjusted the sword-knots of field-marshals, the nobles adopted her favourite colours and tones, and she it was who made the fashions for the *grandes dames*.

She left an immense fortune.

Her library, rich in rare MSS, was even at that time worth a million of francs.

A daughter of the people, yet her memory remains as a kindly patron of the arts and sciences, and as one who possessed the keenest judgment and the brightest wit in a particularly brilliant age.

After her death "the well beloved" locks up her apartments. None are to enter.

The King is disconsolate.

Then comes the sad tidings of the death of the Queen's father. An old and helpless man, he is burnt to death before his attendants can reach him. After that closely follows the death of the Queen herself, no doubt greatly hastened by this family calamity.

The question is whispered, "Who next will be *maitresse en titre*?"

But the King, with some show of feeling, put to flight all the subtle hopes and wiles of Madame de Grammont and many others.

But at length Louis gives vent to his desire for "*un salon*

*pour souper et se reunir un petit comité d'intimes sous le sceptre d'une femme gracieuse,"* and indeed adds, as a tribute to the dead favourite's memory, "*et depuis Madame de Pompadour il ne l'avait pas retrouvé encore."*

Oh gracious monarch !

Thereupon enters on the scene Madame du Barri.

"Madam Beauty is always a Queen, and her empire the entire world," said one of the many admirers of this last uncrowned Queen of Louis XV.

Consider the origin of this woman, and then picture the ordeal she goes through without flinching, with the utmost nerve, with the dignity of an Empress.

The ceremony of the *présentation* of the *maîtresse en titre* was established by the Grand Monarque himself. A trying moment that !

A girl of twenty-three, tall and elegant, wavy light brown hair shadowing a brilliantly fair complexion, and with eyes of a deep violet hue, gazes out of their limpid depths upon—friends ? Not so !

Upon Madame de Grammont, her traducer, who had caused to be published about her scurrilous songs and stories, and had made the so-called "story of her life" to be sold at the street corners, where it was cried aloud at hucksters' stalls with "many a quaint addition." Upon the old Duc de Richelieu, who waited in suspense the entrance of this last favourite.

Upon Grands seigneurs and Grandes dames, who looked for, and assuredly wished to see nothing beyond a creature of the people, who with low speech and hoyden actions will electrify that august circle.

Upon the mothers at the Court of France, who considered she had usurped an exalted post, specially created for the daughters of an exalted class !

The courtiers professed themselves charmed with this vision of youthful grace and beauty.

Doubtless the entire court was prepared to act on the precept Bias taught, "Love as if you should hereafter hate, and hate as if you should hereafter love."

There is a subtle wisdom in the method. And for the most part it is adopted both in courts and elsewhere, even down to the present year of grace !

But we have strayed from Madame de Pompadour and the quiet grave in the Convent of the Capucines.

Of her religious convictions little is made known, but at the time of her elevation to the honour of the *tabouret*, she desired to confess, receive absolution, and partake of the sacrament.

Père de Sacy, a learned Jesuit, was consulted. He at first would not commit himself to a decision, but asked a few days' grace, in order that he might rightly weigh the circumstances.

At the end of a fortnight his answer came, a long letter, in which he reminded her of her professed desire to become a good Christian, and assured her the high road to being so, was to set a good example. To merit and obtain absolution, he desired her to return and be re-united to M. d'Etoiles, or, in any case, to quit the Court.

She, in an angry moment, returned this letter, merely writing upon the back thereof, exclaiming that the father was indeed a true Jesuit, and would doubtless understand her meaning when she said so.

She declared herself as powerful as De Sacy himself, and assured him that in spite of all the Jesuits in the world there she would remain. She signed herself Marquise de Pompadour and *Dame du Palais de la reine*. Her love for her daughter, Alexandrine d'Etiolles, is well authenticated, but the poor child died in her twelfth year in the Convent of the Assumption at St. Honoré.

This probably was the greatest affliction that Madame de Pompadour experienced. A staunch supporter of Voltaire was she, and when Crébillon presented himself to thank her for favours received from the King, and she permitted the old poet to kiss her hand, the disgust and jealousy of Voltaire was great.

Like Madame de Maintenon at the height of her power, Madame de Pompadour nominated to the chief commands in the army as well as to the posts in the state.

She ruled France much as Fleury had done, though, perhaps, with less gratification to its people—by humouring the Sovereign Head.

"I ask you to reflect, Madame," said Marmontel, "that the eyes of the country are upon you. If the vessel of the State be well guided, the blessing of the people will rest upon you, if

it should be wrecked, it is you they will accuse as the cause of their calamity."

A responsibility indeed, the wielding of a sceptre snatched from the feeble hand of a feeble king.

From Madame de Pompadour, Louis XV. received, in an amusing form, almost as chit-chat, a résumé of the real business of state.

Truly this places the King before us in a very pitiable light, but well was it for him that this daughter of a *sous chef* was the most talented and accomplished woman of her time. What a head was that which could grasp the affairs of state, receive ministers, advise financiers, make war, cause the encouragement of art and science, interest itself in the improvements of manufacture, and avert from the people of France the knowledge that a "great" King is of necessity his country's scourge. It is beyond the right of historians to heap opprobrium on Madame de Pompadour as the cause of all the misfortunes of France and the weaknesses of the King.

Few women, indeed, could for twenty years have maintained their supremacy over such a lover, and ruled with unceasing influence in the councils of a kingdom so governed.

The bulk of her property passed to her brother "*le petit frère*," but to the Prince de Soubise, her executor, she bequeathed a diamond of great value.

We picture Versailles in the palmy days of the Old Régime made a gorgeous setting for a gorgeous crowd of courtiers and hangers-on at the courts of the Kings Louis Quatorze and Quinze. And—then—the bathos——!

We take up Thackeray and read, "you pass from the railroad station, through a long, lonely suburb with dusty rows of stunted trees on either side, and some few miserable beggars, idle boys and ragged old women under them. Behind the trees are gaunt, mouldy houses, palaces once, where (in the days of the unbought grace of life) the cheap defence of nations gambled, ogled, swindled, intrigued; whence high-born duchesses used to issue in old times to act as chambermaids to the lovely Du Barri, and mighty princes rolled away in gilt carouches, hot for the honour of lighting His Majesty to bed, or of presenting his stockings when he rose, or of holding his napkin when he dined.

" Tailors, chandlers, tinmen, wretched hucksters and green-

grocers are now established in the mansions of the old peers ; small children are yelling at the doors with mouths besmeared with bread and treacle ; damp rags are hanging out of every one of the windows, steaming in the sun ; oyster-shells, cabbage-stalks, broken crockery, old papers, lie basking in the same cheerful light.

"A solitary water-cart goes jingling down the wide pavement, and spouts a feeble refreshment on the dusty, thirsty stones."

And so an end. The pretty pomp and vanity were past. Madame lay in the grave at the Capucines, a successor reigned detractors, of course, arose in their numbers.

But at least it shall be said of her, that in the midst of her ambition she remembered with Plutarchus that "each of us is born, not for himself only, but that our country claims one part, our relations another, and our friends the remainder."

**WILTON WOLRIGE.**

## Paul the Trespasser.

A SKETCH IN TWO PARTS.

By EVA M. HENRY.

"Love is love only when it is the sacrifice of one's self.

. . . And only in such love do we find happiness, the reward of love."

COUNT TOLSTOI, *Life.*

### PART II.

#### CHAPTER I.

As soon as he had swallowed his breakfast, Paul set out for Lee, which is distant from Ilfracombe some three miles. Arrived at the village, he walked up the road past Mrs. Berisor's gate, and took up his reconnoitring station in the same field whence he had watched on the day of the accident until the moment came for him to appear on the scene. From one corner of it he could see the lawn in front of the house and also the gateway; he could not fail, therefore, to see anyone who might happen to pass in or out. Here he stood for nearly an hour, straining his eyes until the landscape before him sometimes faded into a blurred indistinctness, and smoking cigarettes one after the other at a furious rate until the damp grass immediately around was powdered over with white ashes. At length, when he had almost lost patience, his persistence was rewarded. Mrs. Berisor came out of the gate and with her, Bertie, a circumstance which gave Paul an odd sense of disappointment. He still felt in awe of the child, as he had done on that first day on the hill; yet it was to Bertie in a measure that he owed what acquaintance he had with the mother.

He descended from his coign of vantage and strolled leisurely down the road with the most careless air he could assume. Mrs. Berisor did not observe him until he had almost passed her by, and he did not feel justified in forcing her recognition of his presence by any action on his part. Startled from her apparent

pre-occupation, however, by the sound of his footsteps she glanced towards him and at once held out her hand with the utmost friendliness.

"Mr. Wentworth! I am so glad to meet you, to tell you what I was too much upset to tell you at the time, that I thank you for the trouble you took on my account."

"Please don't mention it," he murmured.

"You see I did not know who you were nor where you were to be found, until, as I mentioned in my note, Doctor Cary told me. He gave you my note?"

Paul felt tempted to deny having received the note. This meeting would thus seem so much more accidental. He conquered the temptation instantly, and replied, "Yes, thank you. He gave it to me three days ago. I hope you have quite recovered from your fall—a nasty fall it was too. You were dragged so far."

"How did you know?"

"I was walking in that field, luckily."

"Yes, it was lucky for me," and she laughed.

"I meant luckily for myself," he answered quite gravely, and she laughed again.

Bertie, who had delayed behind his mother, that he might pick some wild flowers, ran up at this moment.

"Hullo!" said Paul, "and how are you, Master Bertie? You know we are old friends, Mrs. Berisor."

"No we aren't," replied Bertie, promptly. "I've only seen you twice before, when you were the trespasser and when you picked up mother."

Both Mrs. Berisor and Paul burst out laughing at this plain repudiation of "auld acquaintance," and Bertie stared sulkily at his wild flowers.

"By-the-by, Mrs. Berisor," remarked Paul, "I've to plead guilty to trespassing on your ground."

"Don't be afraid. My sentence won't be a hard one."

"What is it to be?"

"Let me see," she said, pausing with mock seriousness.

"Mother, do come," put in Bertie, pulling at her dress. "You promised, you know."

"Oh, yes. Will you walk on with us, Mr. Wentworth. We are going to Farmer Colwill's."

"That's my nurse's father," explained Bertie. "We're going to see the new little rabbits—they've got seven new little rabbits—and I'm going to have a ride on the big farm-horse bare-backed."

Paul was only too ready to accept Mrs. Berisor's invitation to accompany them on their walk, and soon he was chatting with her as if he had known her for years. Constance Berisor's great charm lay in her frank openness of manner and the facility with which she inspired comparative strangers with a feeling of friendly confidence. Paul Wentworth thought her the most delightful companion he had ever known.

"You must come and see me," she said to him, when they neared the end of their walk. "Doctor Cary says you are fond of scenery. I can show you some pretty bits hereabouts. How long are you going to remain in the neighbourhood?"

"I do not know," he replied. "I should like to remain for ever."

"When will you come?" she went on. "To-morrow?"

"Mother," cried Bertie, before he had time to answer her. "What's the name of this flower?"

"That is heather, Bertie—white heather. It is generally supposed to be an emblem of good luck. Where did you find it?"

"On that bank. I'll give it to you."

"Won't you give me a bit?" said Paul, holding out his hand.

"No. It's for mother. Wear it, mother."

"Perhaps there's some more," remarked Paul. "Let us look."

They went over to the bank, but there was not a bit of white heather to be seen.

"I never knew it grew here," said Mrs. Berisor. "I never saw it before."

"You see, you are the fortunate one," was Paul's answer, "and Bertie is to bring you your good luck."

"That is true enough," she said softly, as if to herself, "for my greatest blessing in life is Bertie's love for me."

There was no longer need for Paul to lurk about the roads or conceal himself behind hedges on the chance of seeing Mrs. Berisor; she had invited him to cross her threshold. Scarce a

day passed, but he spent some part of it in her presence. Sometimes they went for a ramble amongst the lovely hills and valleys, and on these occasions Bertie was always with them. Constance Berisor knew every cliff and tor, every coombe and hollow, every thicket of furze and gorse, every blade of grass almost, for miles around; she had seen them all a thousand times before in her walks with Bertie. Now the familiar haunts acquired a new interest since she had a new companion to whom to point out their beauties. Not that Bertie had not been every whit as good company. He had inherited a love of nature from his mother, and he had always considered it his especial duty to give her a full account of every weed and wild-flower they passed on their path, his information being often more curious than true, which information was always interspersed with presentations of many nosegays "for mother to wear" and perhaps, too, with an exchange of kisses into the bargain.

But since Paul Wentworth had made a third in their society, though the nosegays were still presented, they were the only intimation Bertie gave of his presence. He trotted along by himself, usually behind his mother and her companion, and gathered his wild flowers, and having given them to his mother, dropped behind again and began to pick others. He seemed perfectly happy to be left thus to his own devices, and Constance never suspected the disappointment in his little heart as each day brought Mr. Wentworth and the secret hope he nursed that each day's "good-bye" would bring the visits to an end. She had not even noticed that he disliked Mr. Wentworth, until an unexpected absence of the latter was greeted by Bertie with undisguised delight.

They were to walk one day to Westward Ho, a spot which has a double interest, owing to Kingsley's masterpiece, and which indeed owes its existence as an inhabited place to his pour-trayal of the home of the Leiggs, when, on the morning of the day they had arranged for the trip, Paul got a telegram summoning him to London to receive the briefs in a case for which an influential relation had got him retained as one of the counsel. Having his future to make, such a chance was not to be thrown away, even for the sake of a delightful day with his lady love. He started in all haste, having only time for a

hurried scrawl to Constance, written, after squaring matters with the booking-clerk, in the railway-ticket office, and for the immediate delivery of which he gave a boy half-a-crown.

"I'll write again from town to explain," he said to himself. "She might think that scrawl rude and I didn't even mention that I would be back in a day or two. Yes, I'll write at once from town."

Constance was in the garden gathering flowers for the house when the scrawl was brought to her.

"Gone!" she exclaimed half aloud, as she read it. "How sudden! I may never see him again," and she stood idly clipping at the leaves of a rose bush beside her and wondered why she felt sad. Once again she glanced at the short note before putting it into her pocket, and resumed her occupation, hardly noticing what flowers she was cutting.

"Oh, mother, the lily!" cried Bertie all at once. She started and saw that she had cut a great head of lilies, not yet in flower, and which she had been watching for weeks.

"Why did you cut it, mother?"

"It will come out in water, Bertie," she answered with a little nervous laugh. "How stupid of me."

She gave up cutting flowers and went and sat on a rustic bench under the shade of a copper beech in one corner of the garden. As they walked towards it, Bertie asked:

"What time are we going to Westward Ho, mother?"

"We are not going to-day."

"Aren't we? But why, mother?"

"Oh, Mr. Wentworth is gone."

"Gone—where?"

"To London, darling."

"But do you mean that Mr. Wentworth won't be here to-day?"

"No, darling, he won't."

"Oh, how nice."

"Nice?"

"Yes. 'Cos don't you see, we can go a walk, mother, you and I, and it'll be just like it used to. Don't you hope he'll never come back, mother? I do."

Constance turned away her head from the innocent gaze that was fixed on her.

"Bertie, Bertie, you mustn't say things like that about people. You should always be glad to see everybody back again."

Bertie shook his curly head, not being quite ready to admit his obligation on that score. He climbed on to the seat and took possession of his mother's hand.

"Mother," he said after a few minutes of silence. "Mother, I want to ask you something, may I?"

"It depends what the something is."

"Well, would you be glad if my papa came back again—my papa what's dead?"

Constance withdrew her hand, as if she had been stung and a hot flush of shame rose to her cheeks. Strangely enough, as she told Bertie he should be glad to welcome everybody back again, the memory of Mr. Berisor rose before her and she knew that she herself could not act up to her words. The child had unconsciously given a verbal echo to her thought, and she felt ashamed. She hid her burning face in her hands, but she made no answer.

Bertie became alarmed; he was not sure whether she was angry or not. She had told him long ago not to speak of his dead father and he wished now he had not said that. He stood up on the seat so that his head was on a level with his mother's and, putting one arm round her neck, he whispered:

"Mother, darling, I'm so sorry."

For answer she clasped him in her arms and kissed him, and there was something very like a sob in her voice and an unusual brilliancy in her dark eyes, as she said softly:

"My own Bertie."

"I didn't mean it, mother, I didn't indeed want to make you sorry," said Bertie, reproaching himself more than was necessary. "'Cos I love you, mother, better'n anybody. Do you love me better'n anybody?"

"God knows I do," was the fervent answer.

"Did you tell God?"

"God knows everything without being told."

"Whisper, mother. Do you think He knows I love you better'n Him?"

"But you mustn't, darling. You must love Him first."

To this Bertie made no answer. He appeared to be think-

ing out some problem in his little brain. Presently he asked another question.

"Will Mr. Wentworth never come again?"

"I—I—don't know."

"Well, I'm glad he can't come to-day, 'cos then you'll be all mine, mammy, and we'll go a walk like we used—you and I and nobody else. Hurrah!" and he got down off her knee and flung his hat high into the air, shouting, "Nobody else but mammy and me! Nobody else but mammy and me!"

That evening after Constance had seen him tucked into his little bed beside her own and had kissed him and fancied him already asleep, she was in the dressing-room adjoining her bedroom, with the door between ajar, and she heard him repeat this prayer, evidently one of his own planning:

"Dear God, please forgive me for loving mother best. Jesus'll know how it is, 'cos He had a mother when He was a little boy—Amen."

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## CHAPTER II.

WHEN Constance received a second letter from Paul Wentworth, explaining fully the cause of his absence and begging her forgiveness for breaking through the arrangement to go to Westward Ho, she was half pleased, half irritated. Pleased to know that she had done him an injustice in thinking that he had abruptly banished her from his life, irritated that he evidently expected her to feel an interest in his doings. Perhaps she was just a little bit irritated too, that her own feelings answered to his expectations. She could not deny that she did take an undue interest in him. The letter wound up with the intimation that his absence would only be for two days, and somehow this seemed to her more important than what had gone before.

"I am glad he is coming back," she thought. "It is quite a pity when one is just getting to know a person well to have to lose sight of him."

When the third day found Paul once more in Mrs. Berisor's pretty drawing-room, a casual observer, had such an one been

present, might very easily have made the mistake of supposing not only that Mrs. Berisor and Paul were the merest acquaintances, but that they found each other's company the reverse of congenial. Their conversation was constrained, and ever and anon it reverted to the weather. Three days ago they had not wanted for interesting topics whereby they might make the time pass pleasantly. Now, there were awkward pauses every minute that seemed hardly consistent with Constance's idea of "getting to know a person well."

"How hot it is to-day!" she exclaimed for the twentieth time, waving her handkerchief nervously.

"It is," was all the answer. He seemed to be in no talkative mood either.

"Shall we go out?" she asked all at once, at the same time moving towards the door. "It will be cooler out. Along by the cliffs there is always a breeze," she continued. "Will you wait here till I am ready?"

Whilst she was gone Paul employed his time in walking restlessly from his chair to the window, from the window back to his chair. He felt puzzled as to what this new reserve in Mrs. Berisor's manner betokened. The chain of their familiar intercourse having been broken by his three days' absence, did she wish that it should not be taken up again? Better that he had gone away altogether and remembered her as the pleasant companion he had hitherto found her, even though he should remain in ignorance of her feelings towards him. The two days' separation from her had shown him that he could not rest, until she had told him with her own lips what he could not otherwise guess at. Of course, with the common tendency of all self-deception to believe what pleases most, he flattered himself that she would tell him what he most desired—that she loved him. In an uncertain question, we all believe in the solution most agreeable to ourselves, and it is surprising how far these little beliefs go to make life pleasant, even though in the end we must learn that they *are* deceptions. Paul feigned to himself that he would prefer to have certainty either way than dallying ignorance; nevertheless he had not bargained for a certainty unfavourable to himself. This new reserve in Mrs. Berisor's manner towards him dismayed him.

When she re-entered the room she had Bertie by the hand.

The meeting between the child and the man was not cordial, and Paul fancied that Constance looked pleased that this was so.

"Bertie and I have had a walk since you have been here," she remarked, "haven't we, darling?"

"When will we have another?" he asked, looking up into his mother's face that bent over him lovingly.

Constance shrank from the gaze of the innocent blue eyes and raising her head replied: "We are going for a walk now."

Bertie said nothing, but he was unconvinced; the walk did not count when Mr. Wentworth was present.

The exertion of ascending to the higher ground of the cliffs seemed to bring back to Constance her old frank manner. She chatted away to Paul as she had always done, and he too found conversation easier than it had been in the house, though the unusually close feeling in the air was scarcely less apparent on the open heights than it had been in the valley. They climbed a little knoll of sparsely wooded ground, immediately above a bold, jutting cliff, whence they could command a magnificent view of the coast-line on either side.

The sun had been obscured all day by a dull, yellowish haze, that hung low over the horizon and hid from sight all traces of the Island of Lundy, which is plainly visible from the northern shores of Devon. The land view to right and left, on the contrary, was abnormally distinct and its distances seemed brought into close perspective.

There was not a breeze to stir the leaves of the few storm-stunted oaks that grew here and there on the sloping knoll.

A little terraced, grassy bank near its summit, facing seaward, made a pleasant natural seat, and Constance and Bertie had often spent many an hour there, Constance reading or working and Bertie playing around and gathering the ferns and flowers that grew under the trees.

"This is a particular haunt of mine, Mr. Wentworth," said Constance. "Let us sit here. It is far too hot for walking. Look at the sea, it is like a dead thing, and yet do you hear the storm?"

The sea was, as she said, like a dead thing. The water did not look liquid, so still it was; but away from afar there came

the long, ominous roll of a ground swell—a sound as of waves beating and retreating on a pebble beach.

"There will be a change before night," she added, and they were both silent for a time.

Bertie came to them every now and then with a handful of the treasures he had collected—ferns, mosses, sprigs of gorse, trails of ivy, wild thyme—anything for which he thought his mother would care.

Once he brought a few leaves of delicate trefoil. "That is pretty," said Constance. "Could you get some more of it Bertie?"

"I'll go and look for some, mother dear."

He trotted off, only too glad to be sent on a special errand, and once more Constance and Paul were left alone.

They had not noticed how rapidly the storm was gathering, till all at once they were startled by a blinding flash of lightning, that passed like a visible breath of flame right across the whole heavens.

Neither of them had time to speak a syllable, for the thunder was rolling above them almost before the light had vanished. Flash followed peal and peal followed flash in quick succession, and Constance was dazzled by the grandeur of the scene as every instant the fiery glory embosomed heaven and earth till the cliffs shone again, like palaces erected at the bidding of some enchanter's wand.

At length all that had gone before sank into insignificance in one mighty flash; for now the light quivered and ran down the steep rocks in cataracts of molten gold. With that invincible human dread of the manifestations of the Divine power, Constance stretched out her hand convulsively to her companion. He took it in his grasp and held it fast, as the thunder-clap burst with a sound that shook the very earth beneath them and set all the surface of the sea in motion, and seemed loud enough to blast to splinters every rock and cliff, but that the hand that sent it forth had power also to stay its force.

Constance closed her eyes and grew white to the very lips, and even after the force had spent itself and the sound rolled reluctantly away, she sat trembling and speechless, like one stunned. Paul had slipped his arm around her and her hand was still in his. He drew her close to himself, and raising the

hand to his lips kissed it passionately as if all the pent-up longing of weeks had been suddenly let loose.

Constance turned towards him like a woman in a dream, and each was spellbound in the other's gaze. He lowered the hand from his lips, and in the movement, slight as it was, a world of consciousness rushed upon her. She snatched herself from his clasp. "God!" she cried in an agony. "I have forgotten Bertie!" and she sprang to her feet and sped away from the place. Paul followed her, remembering the terror of the storm and that the child was alone.

They caught sight of him almost immediately, some distance down the slope on its inland side. He was seated on the ground apparently motionless, and it flashed on Paul that he was dead. Constance could not sufficiently collect her thoughts to realise even that awful possibility.

"Bertie, my child!" she shouted wildly. "Bertie! I had forgotten you!"

Love can make the swiftest runners, and Constance reached the spot long before Paul, and, snatching up the child in her arms, she almost crushed him to her panting breast.

He was not dead as Paul had fancied, nor even hurt, only very white and scared—too much scared to cry.

The pressure of his mother's arms restored him to a sense of the present.

"Is it over?" he asked, not daring to lift his eyes, lest he should see any more lightning. "Oh, is it over, mother?"

"Yes, darling. It won't hurt you now, mother is here."

"Look at this tree."

It was Paul who spoke.

Constance looked at the tree under which they were standing. It was brown and withered.

"Struck!" she exclaimed, "and my child within a yard of it, and I had forgotten him! God forgive me! God forgive me!"

"Come home, mother," sobbed Bertie.

They set off towards the house, in the rapidly lessening storm, Constance carrying her child and covering him with kisses the while, and Paul walking silent and unheeded, like one forgotten. On the threshold, Constance turned to him, "Good-bye," she said simply, "I cannot ask you in for I must stay with Bertie."

"I will come to-morrow," he said, and went out into the rain that was now falling heavily. He had no misgivings, for he knew that she loved him.

"Mother," said Bertie, a little later, "I did not get the—I don't know what you call it—three leaves together on a stem—what you sent me for."

"Trefoil. Never mind. I do not want it, my darling. I have you. You are all I want."

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### CHAPTER III.

THE morrow had come and had almost gone again and Paul paced restlessly up and down the sea shore, seeking to drown the tempest that raged in his soul in the roar of the breakers thundering against the iron walls that met them eternally with a grim "thus far, but no farther."

She had rejected his love, she had cast it aside as a thing of no consideration—and all for wealth. Ay, and she had crushed out her own love too, for she did love him; love spoke in her eyes, in the quivering of her passionate lips that for one mad moment had been pressed against his own; she loved him with every fibre of her being, but she loved her wealth yet more. What a downfall from the pedestal of noble womanhood whereon his fancy had placed her! Yesterday, in the terror of the storm, she had revealed her love for him, and for a few brief hours he had lived in the perfect joy which that revelation had brought him. To-day he had asked for the re-assurance in words of what she had already told him in the truthful language of look and gesture, and in words she had told him that wealth was more to her than love, that in it her happiness lay.

"If I were to marry you," she had said, "I must lose it all—the money—everything. I cannot—you will understand."

He understood that she was of baser metal than he had dreamed, and that for him henceforth the love of women would be a mere empty phrase. Despicable as she had shown herself to be, he could not thus soon banish her image from his mind; time would efface even the recollection of her beauty. For

the past few weeks his life had been filled with her and with her alone, and to-night she seemed to mock him from every rock and boulder, from every white rolling wave, from every cloud that moved across the face of the waning moon. Seeing them, he was reminded of occasions when together they had gazed on these very objects. He turned away from the sea shore and took his way towards the streets. He knew he could not rest hemmed in by the four walls of a room ; they would stifle him and drive his thoughts in on him with bitterer emphasis. As he walked with downcast head and aimless steps he felt a hand laid on his shoulder.

"Hullo ! Wentworth. I hardly believed it was you. I looked you up a few days ago and they told me you had gone. What did it mean ? "

It was Dr. Cary who spoke.

"I came back—worse luck," muttered Paul.

"Humph ! Tired of the West Country ? I noticed you weren't quite so enthusiastic of late."

"It's a beastly hole. I hate it."

"I know you don't mean that, or I would be angry," laughed Dr Cary. "What has gone wrong with you, that you must vent your anger on the place ? There isn't a woman——?"

Paul interposed with an oath.

"I'm sorry I've touched on a sore subject," remarked the doctor, satisfied that he had hit the right nail on the head. "I was only joking," he added.

"I wish I was only joking," Paul answered. "Yes, there is a woman and you know her, and you made me think she was a good woman, too good for petty weaknesses. She's not, I tell you. I suppose she has deceived you as she deceived me into thinking her a paragon. I know better now."

"Who in the world is this deceiver that you're talking about ? Not—not—Mrs. Berisor ? "

"Yes. Mrs. Berisor. She——"

"Stop ! You don't mean to tell me you have fallen in love with *her* ? "

Paul smiled at the emphasis on the last word.

"So you knew what sort of a woman she was, after all ? " he exclaimed bitterly. "You might have warned me, I think. Yes, I did fall in love with her. I did—do you understand ? I

hate her now, ha, ha ! and she loves me. What a curse is money ! ”

“ What do you mean ? Did you ask her to marry you ? ”

“ I did.”

“ And she refused ? ”

“ She did, d——n her.”

“ For shame, Wentworth, for shame ! You say she loves you ? ” Paul nodded. “ Then she is braver than I took her for. This is what I often feared for her, and she has conquered after all.”

“ Conquered, ay and kept her wealth ! ”

“ Well, don’t you admit it was a hard case ? ”

“ Perhaps, but I would not have believed it of *her*. I fancied she was a woman who would not care for riches.”

“ Not for herself. But of course there’s the child.”

“ As far as I can see,” answered Paul, in his ignorance of the true state of the case, “ as far as I can see, it would have benefited the child. It was selfish of her to want to have all to herself.”

Doctor Cary began to realise that there was a misunderstanding somewhere.

“ Look here, Wentworth,” he said, “ forgive me for asking you. I’m your friend and her friend, you know. What reason did she give for refusing you ? ”

“ Why, of course, that she would lose her wealth.”

“ Is that all she told you ? ”

“ Yes, it was enough to show me I had been deceived.”

Doctor Cary gave a sort of whistle.

“ Well, I gave her credit for being a better woman than most, but I never thought she was brave enough to bear all the blame from a man she cared for.”

“ What do you mean ? ” asked Paul sharply.

“ Come in and I’ll tell you.”

They had reached Doctor Cary’s house, and Paul went in gladly enough. His restless wanderings had been somewhat fatiguing.

“ I am going to tell you,” began the doctor, when they were seated in his cosy study, “ I am going to tell you what I have told to no one since Mrs. Berisor herself made me aware of it after her husband’s death. She did not bind secrecy upon me, for no man’s will is a secret as long as you have a shilling

to spend at Somerset House. But Somerset House is not in Devonshire, so there was no likelihood of the people hereabouts finding out the conditions of Berisor's will, unless somebody told them. I was determined not to be that somebody. I knew that Mrs. Berisor was annoyed, and that she is the kind of woman who doesn't like her annoyances discussed publicly. But I am breaking no confidence in telling you the truth which she has withheld from you. She did not know you would curse her for refusing you. I have heard you curse her, and I consider it only right and just to you and to her to prevent your misjudging her any longer, by telling you all."

"Tell me," said Paul eagerly.

"She refused you for her child's sake," Doctor Cary answered at once.

"How?"

"You must know that Berisor was an odd sort of fellow. He loved his wife in his own way and that was a selfish way—so selfish that he couldn't bear to think she would ever be another man's wife. Many a man is able to prevent this effectually by leaving his property to his wife only on condition of her remaining his widow. Berisor knew well enough that his wife cared too little for wealth to let it stand in her way if she took it into her head to marry."

"That was why she refused me," Paul remarked in a sullen tone.

"She gave you that as her reason—yes, but she did not give you the other and more important reason, namely, that the child would also be disinherited. Berisor knew she would never let *that* be, and he made that the condition on which she might marry."

"That is absurd."

"Perhaps, but it is true. If she marries every farthing goes to a nephew of Berisor's in America. So now you see her reason."

"Why did she not tell me that?"

"How do I know? Perhaps she thought you might conquer her scruples on that score, and so silenced you with the one reason only, which she knew would lower her in your eyes. Perhaps she was too loyal a mother to give you a pretext for disliking the child, since he alone stood in your way. All I can

say is that she was brave to bear your scorn and your anger; and now that you know this I hope you will respect her bravery, and not try to alter the decision she made in the fulness of her mother's love and loyalty."

Paul did not hear the last few sentences. At the words, "*since he alone stood in your way,*" his thoughts travelled back to the scene in the storm on the previous day. He could hear Constance's agonised cry of "Bertie! My child!" He could see her rushing down the slope till she reached the boy sitting there on the grass, white and scared. He could see her pick him up and hug him to her breast, and rain passionate kisses on his tearful face, and beside them the shrunken, withered oak where Heaven's fury had lighted—and ceased. If only—

When Doctor Cary had finished speaking, he looked up at Paul and saw him sitting with trembling hands, convulsively clutched together, his face ashen pale and his eyes starting out of their sockets.

"What is the matter with you, man? You are ill," he cried, rising in alarm.

"It is nothing," gasped Paul, mopping his forehead with a silk handkerchief. "All this has upset me. Thanks, I will have some soda. Never mind me."

There are some thoughts in a man's life that he would fain have never known, and this one that had come to Paul was of this kind. It seemed to him a message from the nether world sent to lure him to destruction.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

THE next day broke wet and cheerless, a cold sou'-wester having set in after the intense heat that had culminated in the thunder-storm.

Constance Berisor sat by the fire in her morning-room, listening to the ceaseless beating of the rain against the window-panes, her sad eyes fixed vacantly on the dull whiteness of the lowering sky without.

Her dream of love was over and for ever. It had been so short-lived, yet so real; almost in the same moment in which she had realised its existence, she had realised also that it must

be buried out of sight, though, out of memory—never. It was like an infant that dies ere the mother has taken it in her arms. She hears its cry and knows that it lives ; then comes death, and instead of her loving arms, a tiny coffin will encircle the little form. But she will not forget ; the knowledge of a life that has been has burnt itself into her brain, and that cry has been echoed to infinity in her heart ; always she will hear it, and memory will never sleep for the sound.

Constance had heard the spoken words of love ; she had felt the kiss of love on her lips ; the thrill of heart answering to heart had swept through her—and had vanished for ever.

Yet there was left to her that undying echo, that mocking unreality to haunt her always, and always to be but an echo and a mockery.

It was over ; the day had broke and the dream had vanished. It may wear to-night again, and other dreams may come, but that dream will come never again.

And she had let him leave her believing that wealth was all she cared to live for, that love was to her a thing of no account, and in so doing she had shown herself to him in an impossible light, a light that distorted the nature upon which it shone. She had given him the impression of being a base and sordid woman, whose best worship was paid at the altar of Mammon, upon which she was ready to immolate not only her own love, but that of another. True, she had done this thing of her own free will as a means to gain the victory on the side of right, but she felt that the means was cowardly. She had betrayed Paul into a moral *cul de sac*, as it were, from which he could only turn away; thus leaving her master of the situation. She had done herself a base injustice in making her conduct appear despicable in the eyes of the man she loved, and it is in the very nature of a woman to seek to stand well before the man she loves. To give the lie to one's nature is also an injustice to whomsoever it is given.

She had not dealt fairly by him in refusing his love for a reason that was half a falsehood, seeing that it was not the whole truth. It was not too late yet to retrieve that wrong. She could write to him and tell him all the truth, and what she had feared in his presence—that her love for him might make her overlook her love for Bertie—she had not to fear now that

he was absent. She knew well that the one love was not so deep rooted as the other, not so surely founded on reason ; but in the passion of presence reason may be overlooked. Boisterous shallows have more power to engulf than the still waters that run deep.

She sat down to her writing-table. She had not written to him since she wrote that little note to thank him for his kindness when she fell, and now, as then, she was at a loss to know how to commence. She bridged over this difficulty by at once dashing into what she meant to say, without formal commencement.

" I have done both of us an injustice," she wrote. " You and me ; and when I have explained how and why I did so, I will ask for your pardon, which it were almost justice in you to withhold. We love each other, and that we must be parted is no fault of mine. It is my will and yet my necessity that it should be so, though that necessity is the outcome of another love—a mother's. I told you that I would not marry you because I should lose my wealth. That is true, but more than that is true also, for Bertie would be deprived of it as well, the will left by Mr. Berisor providing that in case of my marriage all the property is to pass to his nephew. Now you will understand why I am bound to widowhood, and for Bertie's sake I know you will not seek to deter me from it.

" I did not tell you all the truth yesterday, in the first place because I am a woman, and women are weak where love assails, though I doubt not but your love had been too honourable and manly to make a conquest when the foe has voluntarily shown its own tactics and fallen at your feet. Secondly, I fancied that it was more loyal to Bertie not to tell you all, in case you should look on him as a sort of barrier between us. Now, I am convinced that I was disloyal to you in sowing the seeds of bitterness in your heart by showing myself base and unworthy of a man's love. If you asked for bread and I had none to give you was it therefore right for me to give you a stone ? No. And this is what I have done, and if you reproach me, be sure that I reproach myself still more. If you forgive me write to me . ' I forgive,' but no other word, and do not try to see me. You had a mother, Paul, and for the sake of the love she bore you I

ask you to be strong in thus helping me to do my duty as a mother. Go away far from this and forget that you have ever seen

CONSTANCE BERISOR."

She wrote to the very end without stopping to raise her head, and she did not notice that someone had opened the door and stood on the threshold waiting for her to look up, or give sign that she heard.

"Constance." It was Paul's voice.

"Paul! What brings you?" she gasped, rising and leaning her finger tips on the writing-table as if for support. She cowered away from him as he came towards her, and made a gesture with one hand motioning him off.

"I have heard all!" he exclaimed, "my darling, how unselfish it was of you!"

"What? I don't understand. Have you heard about—"

"About the property going from Bertie—? Yes."

"And—and you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, my love? I think you have acted nobly."

"I am glad. There is nothing else then beside. Good-bye. She hoped he would go.

"There is everything else beside—our love, our future together as man and wife. Think what happiness it will be!"

"Hush! Please do not touch me. Paul, are you mad? Go. In mercy to me."

He had clasped her in his strong arms, and though she struggled to be free, he had laid her head on his shoulder and his lips met hers.

"Constance, my love! My wife! Your fight is over. You have fought bravely, my darling, but henceforth there will be only love. I have found the way to arrange everything and Bertie will lose nothing."

"How? What? Tell me quickly, what do you mean?"

She took his hands and held them tightly in her excitement, while her hot breath came and went through her parted lips till the words she uttered were half-stifled.

"We can dispute the will," said Paul, with legal coolness.

"Dispute the will. How?"

She released his hands and let herself sink into a chair and

prepared to listen. He sat facing her and quietly unfolded the plan.

"It will be easily managed," he explained. "In the face of things the will is ridiculous. At least the part relating to Bertie is ridiculous; it is of course common enough to find men tying up their property so that their widows cannot marry without losing it, but to punish the child for the mother's action is preposterous. It is legal that condition—perfectly legal—to the discredit of our laws of inheritance, be it said. But although a will may in itself be perfectly legal, it may have been made under illegal conditions. You see a man who would deliberately make a will like that cannot have been in a fit state to make a will at all."

"What do you mean?"

"That Mr. Berisor might have been insane."

"Mr. Berisor was not insane," said Constance firmly.

"We need not put it so strongly. It would not be necessary to prove absolute insanity," here Paul coloured visibly, "but you might doubtless find some circumstance that would suffice, you understand."

She looked Paul straight in the face, till his gaze fell beneath the truth that shone in her clear eyes. Then she made a sound like a sob and covered her face with her hands. He came and stood close to her and tried to take her hand, but she drew it away.

"It would be worth it, my darling," he whispered. "You love and you know what love is worth. It will be easy. I will manage it—hunt up old servants and pay them and get a few scraps of clear evidence."

"And try and make truth out of a lie?" she said in a hard, constrained tone. "You could not do it."

"We could easily manage—"

"Not we," she interrupted quickly. "I will not tell a lie. If there were a hundred circumstances all of sufficient weight for the purpose I would not adduce a single one of them against what my conviction proclaims to be the truth, that Mr. Berisor was of perfectly sound mind to the last hour of his life. I will not tell the lie you want me to tell. Do you hear, Paul Wentworth? I will not, I could not be a living lie. You laugh—you don't believe in truth, but I do."

She had risen, and she stood before him in a majestic rage that made her beauty but the more brilliant. Her eyes flashed lightnings, and her lips curled in scorn, showing her white, set teeth; the colour glowed in her cheeks and her whole frame shook with passion.

"I don't believe you love me," he said.

She did not answer, but the fierceness died from her eyes and in its place there was a soft, yearning sadness. Her lips quivered, and one hand went involuntarily to her heart.

He caught her hands in both his own.

"You do love me," he whispered. "I know it."

There they stood man and woman face to face, the love in their souls revealed to each other, hers cast about with a halo of truth and purity, and his—what? Did the evil thought only come then, as he spoke, or had it been there always, a canker eating into the better part of his nature? Hardly the latter, since he could inspire love in a woman such as she. Did her beauty intoxicate him, so that all his sense of good and evil was dulled, and that the words he spoke were but a meaningless jabber, which he would deny having spoken when the intoxication was worn off?

"You do love me," he repeated very slowly. "You do love me, and you will not tell a lie. You will not marry me, for that might harm your child. You love me and I love you. Let us love then, and our love will harm no one."

She shook herself free from his grasp, and put half the length of the room between them; she spoke but one word:

"Go!"

When she was alone she took from the writing-table a small leather-covered box, in which she kept odds and ends of letters and trifles of no value to anyone except herself, little mementoes of Bertie, locks of his hair at various ages, a coral and bells that had afforded him intense delight in his babyhood, a mat made of strips of coloured paper arranged in a design, the work of his little fingers and which he had presented to his mother on her last birthday.

She sat by the fire and opened this box of relics. Amongst other things it contained, there were the two letters she had received from Paul, one of them the mere scrawl he had written

on the morning he had gone so hurriedly to London, the other being the longer one explaining his absence. They were not love letters in any sense of the term, and when she received them they had none of the value in her eyes which the smallest token belonging to the beloved has for the woman who knows that she loves. Constance's heart had not been known to herself at the time, and she had kept the letters for no reason that was very clear to herself. With them there was a withered rosebud that he had worn and had given to her because she noticed its fragrance. She had put it into the box to make a sweet scent, at least that was the reason she assigned to herself, though some thought of the giver may have lurked in her mind as she did so. She hastily grasped these things and threw them on the fire. Almost at once she caught sight of a sprig of white heather that had been in the box and had got mixed with the letters. It was the bit Bertie had given her on the day she met Paul on the village road, and it flashed on her that she must not destroy the good luck that her child had brought her. She braved the intense heat and snatched it from the papers that were curling to burn. The flame, leaping up at the instant, caught the soft white crêpe tucker that edged the sleeve of her dress. She did not cry out or beat a hasty retreat from the fireplace, but with quick presence of mind she held her wrist upright to prevent the flame from spreading along the sleeve itself. A vase of flowers stood on the mantel-shelf; she seized it and dashed its contents, water, flowers and all, on the fire that was creeping round the inflammable crêpe like a golden serpent. There was a slight fizzling noise, and the serpent had vanished. Her hand was still clenched on the white heather.

"Mother! what are you doing?" and Bertie caught at her skirt and looked up wonderingly.

"I have burnt my wrist, Bertie," she said simply.

"Oh, mammy, is it sore?"

"Yes, darling—a little."

The cooling effect of the water had worn off, and the fierce pain that followed it made the tears start into her eyes and she turned white to the lips.

"Give me your handkerchief, Bertie, and go for Annie."

"Sit down, mammy, and let me do it," he said, as she attempted to roll the handkerchief round the burnt wrist. She

held it out to him, and with careful, if somewhat awkward little fingers, he commenced to bind it up. All at once he stopped. "If I kiss it, it'll make it better!" he exclaimed, thinking of a remedy that always proved efficacious when he himself got a hurt. A kiss from his mother had always the power to stop his tears. He raised the handkerchief, uncovering the burn, and pressed his soft childish lips to the place.

"Is it better now, mammy darling?"

For answer she clasped him to her breast, and, forgetful of the hurt she had received, thought only of the happiness her love for her child had always brought her.

THE END.

## **"The Empty House."**

### I.

THE rain fell heavily last night—  
I gazed across the street in vain,  
Mad hope, to see your flickering light  
Shine in the lonely room again.  
A tempest shook the house last night,  
The torrents beat against your room ;  
And not a star peeped from the height :  
Your house was silent as the tomb.

### II.

I wept the hours away last night,  
O night more wretched than the day !  
. . . Not doubting but with morning light  
To see your face across the way.  
. . . The curtain was not drawn aside,  
No face leant smiling on the sill ;  
The rain still fell, the bleak wind sighed,  
Your house was desolate and still.

## Going On.

BY LUCIE H. ARMSTRONG.

FEW subjects present greater matter for thought to the philosopher than the different meanings which are attached to certain phrases, according to the class of society in which they are uttered.

A "function" has quite a different signification in the classroom to what it has in society, and whereas in the discourse of the learned professor it has its fixed and arbitrary meaning, it becomes delightfully elastic in the lips of the society belle, who makes it express any kind of entertainment from the laying of a foundation stone to a Strawberry Tea.

Similarly, when Edwin enquires of Angelina at a garden party whether she will "walk round," he does not use the phrase in the sense of the negro minstrel, to whom this expression means a number of eccentric steps at the end of a song. He merely intends to invite her to make a tour of the lawn with him, so that they may greet all the acquaintances they meet by the way.

The phrase which forms the title of this paper has an entirely different meaning in the upper and lower strata of society. When Mary Ann feels herself at a loss for a suitable reply to a witticism of 'Arry's, she says "Go on!" by way of repartee, and this does not imply that he should at once fly the spot and proceed to another fashionable entertainment, or indeed that he should go away at all. It may rather be taken as a delicate form of encouragement than an entreaty to depart.

Similarly, when the friends of the well-assorted pair later on remark, "How you have been a-going-on, Mary Ann!" they do not use the term in our sense of the word, but are reduced to it through a want of acquaintance with the verb "to flirt." "Going on" in the lower classes cannot be said to admit of any very dignified interpretation, being generally used as a convenient euphemism for less polite expressions.

"I don't approve of her goings on" is the *dernier mot* of reproof with the Whitechapel matron, and it is doubtless the form of

calumny not to be escaped even by those ladies of her circle who have attained the Arctic conditions alluded to by Hamlet.

"Going on" is not necessarily a term of reprobation amongst the lower orders, but at best it is an apologetic phrase descriptive of persons who give way to high spirits under the excitement of congenial company.

But in society this phrase raises its head, it becomes suddenly endued with life and dignity, acquiring that graceful rigidity which the American novelist describes as "the stiffness of a very tall feather."

"Going on" is the watch-word of society, the creed and rule of life with the fashionable. It is the gulf which separates the popular from the tolerated, the shibboleth by which the elect may recognise their brethren. "Going on" implies the possession of many invitations, and a constant struggle to cope with all that the world requires of its favourites. It also presupposes a certain superiority to the fixed conditions of time and space, and a resolution to get as much into the day as possible. Flexibility of mind is demanded by the adherents of this creed, and much resolution in letting no weak prayers on the part of a hostess detain them until it is too late to get to another entertainment.

The fine lady who has nothing whatever to do with her time likes to imagine that she is always tremendously busy. "If I lose half-an-hour in the day," she says, "I can never make it up." She likes to pay a dozen calls in the afternoon, to look in at a number of parties. She is truly like the Huma bird whom Wendell Holmes' lecturer quoted so unfortunately, and is always in flight. Above all things she dislikes to look as though she had any time on her hands, and she only struggles up a crowded staircase in order that she may pop her head into the room, whisper to her companion, "there's nobody here," and walk down again. You never get a chance of a rational conversation with her. She is always just going away when you meet her. "Have you been here long?" is always her first query, and as you value her respect be careful to reply that you have only that moment arrived. "I've only just come," she informs you in a hurried whisper, "but I'm not going to stay. I've heard Mr. Spouter so often this season—I know just what he's going to say when he stands up." Here she commences to edge to-

wards the doorway, throwing her last remark to you over her shoulder as she departs. "We are just going to look in at Mr. Maulstick's studio-tea, because he said he'd be so awfully disappointed if he didn't see us. Poor young fellow!" (in a deep whisper). "He's awfully poor, you know, and he's just the sort of person I wouldn't disappoint for worlds! We've just come from the private view at the Grosvenor. Nobody there but Frumps!" A shake of the head, a shrug of the shoulders, and the smart little lady is gone. Following in her wake is a disconsolate daughter of seventeen, only just come out, who has been missing the object of her admiration at every place they have been to all the afternoon, through her mother's insane *penchant* for "going on."

"May I have No. 13 in the programme?" asks the ardent youth of the society belle, as he tries to put down his initials with one of those horrid little pencils, like a varnished lucifer-match, which dangle at the side of a dance-card.

"I am afraid I shan't be here," is the reply, "we are going on to the Highfliers'."

The Highfliers' dance is the ruin of Mrs. Smallflight's party. All through the evening she hears one guest say to the other, "Are you going on?" and she knows that she will suddenly find herself high and dry, with her rooms bereft of all the *best* people, who will soon surge into the next house, like troubles, not singly, but in battalions.

Poor Mrs. Smallflight! How unfortunate she is to have given her dance on the same night as Mrs. Highflier—Mrs. Highflier, whose proximity was the one attraction which influenced her in her choice of a neighbourhood.

People go and see her on the way to Mrs. Highflier's, and her mission in life is to serve as a sort of warming-pan to her next-door neighbour, her house being considered as a place where people fill up the first part of the evening before flying on to more favoured regions. As a rule, they do not say where they are going on to. A knowledge of the existence of Mrs. Highflier's party is taken for granted—ignorance shews you at once to belong to the unelect for whose conversion no one labours. The initiated person smiles blandly, and simply says, "We are going on." Some one else says, "So are we," and in a moment the first speaker recognises the second as belonging to

the Highflier set and worthy of cultivation. The poor hostess stands at the door, and tries to conceal her vexation as one after the other of her guests approaches her with outstretched hand and earnest gaze, in the silent manner which is the regulation form for departure. It is a dreadful procession, such as greets the victim of a nightmare, and the hostess almost feels as though it were an evil dream as one after the other of her guests come up, silent and staring, just as fishes come up to the glass in an aquarium, and give her the pump-handle hand-shake of departure. "*Et tu Brute?*" she might well exclaim, as her favourite friend, her tame cat, who is always welcome in the house, and as much a part of her dinner-parties as the extra leaf in the table, takes his departure with the rest. In a few moments all have fled, and the popular actor, who had promised to come in on his way from the theatre, finds an audience unworthy of the slightest exertion.

But sad as is the position of the hostess, who is the victim of the mania for "going on," she must bow her head to a practice which is the special characteristic of the age in which she lives. Life is too full now for any of us to do anything exhaustively, and skimming from place to place has attained the proportions of a fine art. We have no time to do anything thoroughly, we read reviews instead of books, and leading articles instead of speeches, and we fly from subject to subject in conversation in a way which would have appalled the *raconteur* of an earlier and more patient age. The practice spreads through the professions, the musical critic attends a quarter of a concert, and reporters are not allowed more than half an hour for a bazaar. As for musicians, they spend the whole of the season in flying from place to place, and the most popular ones appear at so many different concerts in the course of an afternoon that they may be said to be practically ubiquitous. No matter that they come all in their wrong places in the programme, and are sometimes too late to appear at all, they are "going on," and even if some of their charm vanishes from that want of quiet which is a necessity to the artist, they feel that they are in accordance with the spirit of the times.

It is evident that the habit of "going on" must develop quite a special order of faculties, and most of them such as are held in special commendation in modern times. Flexibility of mind,

rapidity in taking in impressions, and a facility in passing from one subject to another, all come with the popular habit, to say nothing of a sense of time almost equal to that of the actor who, whilst chatting familiarly in the green-room, knows to a second when his cue arrives, and stalks off silently at the end of a sentence, meeting the call-boy who was coming to summon him. This practice also tends to increase our sense of superiority to our neighbours, and puts us into a position to offer up the Scotch prayer, "Lord gie us a good conceit o' ourselves." For it is not in human nature for the person who is "going on" not to feel slightly superior to the one who is poor-spirited enough to "do" only one party in an evening. The imagination of the latter is left free to play upon the scenes to which the festive one is invited, and it is impossible not to imagine that there is something specially fine about a place when one is not oneself "going on."

But there are compensations in all things, and the man whose looking-glass is not obscured with invitation-cards can at least boast that he thoroughly enjoys the few entertainments in which he participates. For many good things are missed through the habit of "going on," a restless habit of mind is acquired, and no one thing is ever done thoroughly. The pleasure-seeker flies from one entertainment to another till there there is little left in the way of surprise, and if a modern society belle were to get to paradise itself it is doubtful whether she would not enquire, after the first few minutes, where she was "going on" to next.

## A Lover's Secret.

BY MRS. LOVETT CAMERON,

Author of "In a Grass Country," "A Devout Lover," "A Lost Wife,"  
"This Wicked World," Etc.

### CHAPTER XXXIV.

#### OLD MISS DURHAM REPENTS.

"Confess yourself to Heaven,  
Repent what's past ; avoid what is to come."

—SHAKESPEARE.—*Hamlet*.

THE clangor peal of the door-bell rang through the echoing silence of the great empty house.

Miss Durham laid down her book and listened attentively. She was altered and aged, she had had a slight stroke of paralysis and had almost entirely lost the use of her legs, her face had grown thin and drawn, and waxen-yellow in its hue, but the keen hawk eyes were as full of life as ever, and both sight and hearing were undimmed ; her hair too was but faintly streaked with grey, and was glossy and plentiful still, like the hair of a young woman.

Presently she heard the sound of voices outside in the hall. Wilson's voice, which she recognised, and another—a man's voice—which was not the Vicar's. No other male visitor came to the house in the afternoon. Who could it be ?

There seemed to be some argument or discussion going on ; and whatever it was there was no end to it. The tones of Wilson's voice became raised and angry.

Miss Durham grew not only curious but impatient. She struck her hand sharply on the brass hand-bell by her side on the table.

Instantly Wilson appeared at the open door.

"What is going on—who is out there?" demanded his mistress imperiously.

"It's one of them gentlemen, Ma'am—the one as came some little time back."

"One of *those*? you mean those that were here four summers ago?" she enquired with a sudden eagerness, leaning forward in her chair.

"Yes, ma'am. Most impudent I call it, won't take an answer and go. I've told 'im as you see no visitors now of any kind, but 'e won't budge an inch. Don't be afraid, ma'am, I've left James at the door, with strict orders not to let 'im cross the thres'old save hover 'is dead body."

"Nonsense! let the man in. I will see him."

Wilson fell back a step, he could scarcely believe his ears.

"You wish to see him, ma'am?" he repeated blankly.

"Certainly. Don't you hear me, you fool? Go and show the gentleman in."

Wilson retired sullenly. In a moment he returned, and flinging wide the door announced in a sepulchral voice:

"Mr. Lancelot Parker."

Old Miss Durham fixed her gold-rimmed spectacles upon her nose and inspected the intruder with a scrutinizing gaze. She did not shake hands with him nor offer him a scat.

Lance was red and hot, and felt very uncomfortable. But there was a bulldog determination about him too. He stuck his eyeglass into his eye and, nothing daunted, stared back again at the old lady.

"You wish to see me sir, I understand?"

"Yes, madam. I am obliged to you for granting me an interview."

"What do you desire of me?"

"I simply desire to ask you a question, to which I am sure you will kindly give me an answer."

"I've hanswered hall 'is questions halready," quoth Wilson gruffly by the doorway. "I've told 'im hover and hover again but 'e won't take a hanswer."

"I have reason to believe that your servant is not speaking the truth to me, and that he did not speak the truth to me a few weeks ago, when I was here before. And that is why, madam, I

am intruding upon your privacy in order to learn what I desire to know from your own lips."

"Ask your question, young man, and I will answer you."

"Is your niece, Miss Margaret Durham, dead?"

For a moment the old woman's face worked as though with secret emotion. But controlling herself with an effort, she answered in a cold, matter-of-fact voice :

"Certainly she is dead. She died last summer of malignant Typhus fever, and lies buried in Fairley Churchyard, where you may see the cross erected to her memory."

"There—didn't I tell ye so?" cried Wilson exultingly, by the door.

Lance cast a swift glance of rage and contempt behind him and continued, unmoved :

"Then are *both* your nieces dead, madam?"

"Both? certainly not! My elder niece died. I have no reason to suppose that my great-niece Madge is not alive."

Lance drew a long breath. "Then by what right, madam, does your butler say that she is dead?"

"I said nothing of the sort, sir," cried Wilson excitedly. "You hasked for Miss Margaret and I told you Miss Margaret was dead."

"You told me not five minutes ago that *both* the Miss Margarets were dead."

"Wilson!" cried the old lady sharply. "How dared you utter such a lie? What business had you to say such a thing?"

"Why you told me yourself, ma'am, years ago, if hever heither of these two young gents was to come hasking at the door for Miss Madge, I was to say she was dead, it was your own horders, mum."

"Leave the room, Wilson, instantly," cried the old woman furiously, ill-pleased at having her own orders brought up against her. She pointed with a withered yellow finger to the door.

Wilson began a remonstrance.

"Leave the room, you blockhead!" shouted the old lady.

"I think you had better go," said Lance, and as he spoke he made one step towards the man, and there was something in his face which caused Wilson to vanish with a precipitation which was somewhat comical.

Lance came back, smiling grimly. Miss Durham was still trembling with rage.

"Sit down sir," she said to him with more affability than she had yet displayed, motioning him with her hand to a chair. He bowed and obeyed her.

"I am truly rejoiced, Miss Durham, to learn that I was misinformed about your great-niece, Miss Madge, and that she is still alive. Since this is the case, would it be too much if I were to ask to be allowed to see her?"

Miss Durham glanced at him keenly.

"It would be too much—far too much—even if it were in my power to grant so audacious a request. But, unfortunately, it is not in my power. Madge is not here."

"Not here? Where is she then?"

For the first time he became aware of a subtle change in her expression. She was no longer imperious and autocratic. She leant forward with both wrinkled hands upon her knees, and looked at him enquiringly—almost wistfully.

"That is what I hoped you had come to tell me—Mr.—Mr.—Parker was it?—oh, I thought it was something else. But I forget the name, it is so long ago. Never mind! Can you tell me nothing of her?"

"I, madam? How should I know where your niece is?"

"Yet surely it was to *you* she must have gone! Who else should she have gone to?—poor, deluded girl!"

"I know nothing of her—nothing. I have been abroad."

She nodded her head. "Yes, yes, I remember," she murmured. Then aloud, and fixing upon him a look of anxious enquiry, "What can have become of her? After all, she was my flesh and blood. I did not mean to drive her to that. I meant to do the best for her. And now she haunts me night and day. It is lonely without her, in this great house—very lonely. I have no one but Wilson and the other servants to speak to, and I have been ill since she left, and Wilson grows domineering and insolent. Hush!" and she laid her finger on her lips and glanced nervously towards the door. "He will be listening, I make no doubt. Go and see—step softly, Mr. Parker—he often listens."

Lance crept across the room, turned the door-handle softly

and was just in time to see Wilson's retreating form scuffling away down the passage.

"I thought so! Bring your chair closer to me, so that I can speak in a low voice—then he won't be able to hear us. He is deaf, that is a comfort!" she added with a malicious chuckle. "Very deaf, thank God! Deafier than I am."

A sort of pity for the helpless old woman, bereft of her natural protectors, and left to the mercy of this truculent old man-servant, arose within him. He ought to have been angry with her for her cruelty to Madge, but he could not be angry, she was so old, so very old, and she seemed sorry, too, and all the barriers of her stern self-sufficiency seemed breaking down under the weight of her age and infirmity. One forgives so much to the old.

His voice was quite gentle and kind when he spoke again.

"Am I to understand then, Miss Durham, that Madge ran away from home?"

She sighed and nodded three or four times in assent. The recollection seemed to distress her.

"Can you not imagine at all where she may have gone? Had she any friends in London?"

"Ah! you think she went to London, then?" she asked quickly.

"Yes, because—well, I will be open with you, Miss Durham—when I returned to England last summer, I found at my club a letter from your niece—which, alas! was a month old—asking me to meet her at Paddington Station. That is what makes me conclude that it was to London that she went."

Miss Durham settled her spectacles more firmly upon her nose and regarded him attentively.

"So—she did do her best to join you," she said slowly, and then after a pause, during which she continued to scrutinize him narrowly, she added, almost involuntarily, "You are not handsome. I wonder what on earth the poor, silly child saw in you!"

Lance coloured furiously up to the roots of his hair.

"I—I don't suppose—she—looked at me particularly," he stammered.

"Umph!" grunted the old lady shortly and derisively. Then facing him with a certain dignity, she continued:

"Look here, Mr.—Mr.—Parker. We had better understand one another. Between us this poor child of mine has suffered badly. I don't say I am not to blame. I am a woman of strong prejudices and opinions, and I trained up both my nieces after my own ideal of what women should be. I believe, and nothing in my experience has yet proved to me that I am wrong in believing, that men only bring trouble and sorrow and shame into women's lives, and I brought up my nieces to believe in it too. I taught them to look forward, not to miserable marriages as the end of their existence, but to the peace and security of a self-sufficient single life. Well, I believe to this hour that I am right, and that women are safer and happier without a man in their lives. But there are, I am aware, many women to whom folly is more attractive than wisdom, and the glamour of a man's deceitful words more fascinating than wholesome maxims from an old woman's lips. My poor Madge—pretty in face and weak and foolish in character, was doubtless one of these. Had I been awake to the fact sooner, I might have seen that I was making a mistake with her, and that it would have been better to let her have her own way and marry, even to misery, than to fall into the slough of shame and despair in which she has utterly destroyed herself—"

"Miss Durham!" cried Lance, "what can you mean?—those are cruel and wicked words. I entreat you to unsay them! there can be no shame upon her—none—none!"

"Well, I honour you, sir, for your candour in owning, at all events, that the shame is far less deserved by the girl who sacrifices herself to her weakness and her love, than by the deliberate destroyer of her happiness, who betrays her first and then meanly deserts her. To such a one, sir, it were well indeed to apply the hardest words which the English language can supply of disgrace and opprobrium."

She remained looking at him fiercely and angrily.

Lance, with his ruddy countenance paled to a sickly yellow, stared at her back with horror and dismay. What terrible thing was it that this old woman was saying to him? What awful secret concerning her, who was to him the incarnation of goodness in woman, was she about to reveal to him? He was spell-bound—he could not utter a word.

"Look here, Mr. Parker," continued the old woman with

determination, "no wonder you look agitated and guilty. You *are* guilty. I know your secret. You ruined my great-niece. Are you prepared to make amends to her? to find her wherever she may be, and to marry her as soon as you find her?"

"I ruin your niece!" cried Lance with indignation. "I be guilty of so foul a crime! As there a God above us, it is a lie, and I will stake my soul upon the spotless purity and innocence of the woman your wicked words so foully malign."

He stood before her with anger blazing in his eyes; he was angry with that righteous wrath which becomes a man well, and before which slanderous tongues are crushed and silenced into ignominious fear.

But Miss Durham was neither crushed or silenced, nor yet was she afraid.

"You cannot deny that you loved her," she persisted.

"I do not deny it. I loved her then, I love her now. If I find her I will certainly marry her, if she will have me, that very day, that very hour. But to dare to tell me that I betrayed or deceived her—that she, who is an angel of goodness, has ever fallen from her innocence and purity—that is what no living soul shall utter in my presence! It is only because you are a woman, and old, that you have the courage to say such wicked and lying words of her."

Yet she did not seem frightened or abashed by his words, only somewhat surprised and puzzled.

"And yet," she said after a minute, and her voice was cool and collected, "and yet how can you possibly deny it, when there is the child?"

There was a moment of absolute silence. The old lady sat bolt upright in her chair with a little smile of triumph upon her thin pale lips, and Lance stared at her dully and bewilderedly. The flush of anger had faded from his face, there seemed to arise a strange mist about him, the objects in the room, the furniture around the table, the books in the shelves, the pictures on the walls, became all blotted together into a chaotic jumble, only although he could not see, he seemed to hear with a horrible distinctness. The ticking of the clock, the fall of a coal into the fender, the twittering of a canary in its cage in the window, all pierced through his brain with something akin to physical pain.

"The child!" he repeated at last, dully and vacantly, then after a long pause—"Whose child?"

"Well—yours, I presume, Mr. Parker."

A strong shudder shook him.

"God forbid!" he cried. "God forbid that such a thing should be said of me!" and then all at once he awoke from his lethargy—the scales fell from his eyes and the *truth*, in letters of flame, seemed to stand out of the darkness in giant characters before him.

The child, of course, was Jack's! But simultaneously with the thought an equally strong conviction forced itself upon him with all the strength of an actual revelation—he was certain that Jack was incapable of such foul dishonour towards an innocent girl who loved him and trusted in him.

Jack had been weak and foolish no doubt, misguided evidently and utterly wanting in true courage and determination—but so vile a criminal as this old woman believed to exist—no, never, never! Perish the thought in shame and confusion! Jack would be Jack no longer, and truth and goodness have ceased to exist, ere such a thing could be true!

And then the secret, that secret which his friend had guarded so long, and kept from him so religiously and with such mistaken reserve, flashed itself suddenly into his soul with an irresistible force.

Madge must have been married to him secretly. She must have been his wife!

*Have been?* Why, if she lived now she was his wife still!—at this very moment—and this other marriage must be stopped—stopped at once—immediately!—there was no time to be lost.

He sprang to his feet in wild and uncontrollable emotion, the utter destruction of his own hopes and secret aspirations scarcely caused him any pain, so great was his eagerness to set right this great and terrible wrong that was about to be done to her he loved.

"I must go," he said agitatedly, holding out his hand to the old lady. "I must go at once, there is no time to lose."

"Go? Go?" repeated the old lady mockingly. "What, with all this history unexplained? No, no, Mr. Parker, you owe it to me to give me some explanation of the past, some promise, at least, for the future!"

She was right. He sat down again.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Durham, I will give you every explanation in my power. But you are under a great mistake. Both I and my friend loved your niece, but I loved her in vain—it was my friend, Mr. Ludlow, who won her—he was, no doubt, secretly married to her."

"Ludlow!" she repeated half to herself. "Yes, now I remember, it was *Ludlow*—that was the name, Jack Ludlow!" then aloud she asked, "What makes you say that? Why should you suppose that they were married?"

"Because I know my friend better than you appear to know your niece. If there is a child, it is because they were married. Jack Ludlow is a gentleman, not only by birth and education, but to the very heart; he is absolutely incapable of such baseness and dishonour as you have imagined. I will stake my soul upon it that Madge is his wife."

"Why then did he desert her?"

"Why? Miss Durham, ask your own conscience! Was it not because you—you, yourself wrote and told him that she died four years ago? and he was foolish enough to believe you! No doubt in your narrow wisdom you thought to divide them for ever, and see what an evil thing you have done to your own flesh and blood!"

She had nothing to say. She saw that he knew what she had done, and she had no force left to deny it.

A few weak tears, the first, perhaps, that mortal man had ever seen shed by that hard old woman, gushed from her eyes. She fell back wailingly upon her original grievance.

"If only we knew where to find her, all might yet be well!" she whined plaintively.

"We will find her—Jack and I, and all shall be well yet," he answered with determination. "If she is alive, we will find her. She had the child with her?"

"Yes, she took him. She was afraid I should part her from him." She bowed her head and was afraid to look at him.

Lance glanced at her bitterly and sternly. Piece by piece the miserable story seemed to fit itself together at last.

"Had she any money with her?"

"A few pounds, five I had given her, and a little money, perhaps, of her own—about seven in all, I daresay."

"Seven pounds on which to support herself and a child for four or five months ! My God ! what can have become of them ?" he groaned, "they may both be dead of starvation by this time ! Miss Durham, do you know that you are a very wicked woman ? You have not long to live. You had better repent of your sins and make your peace with God before you die."

A deathly yellow pallor overspread her wrinkled face—for the first time there was terror and remorse in her eyes.

She clasped her withered hands tremblingly together.

"I know, I know," she cried brokenly. "Don't you think that I have thought of it all, as I have sat here alone day after day, week after week ? Do you suppose that I am not sorry for what I have done—when night after night she, that other dear Margaret who is in Heaven, comes and stands with her white dead face by my bedside and says to me—'What have you done with Madge—what have you done with Madge?' Oh, you think because I am old and hard that I have ceased to feel or to suffer ! That I don't know what remorse is ? Stay, then, I will show you that I repent, I will make amends—I will do my best, all that I can" her voice grew weak and broken, her words came with difficulty and in rasping sobs from her throat. She pointed with one hand to a secretaire behind her, the other fumbling in her velvet bag. "The Will—find the Will," she gasped, "the top drawer, here take the key—this one—don't make a noise—he will hear, that is it, the long blue envelope and another one at the back—quite at the back, there that is it—bring them here, quick, quick !"

Lance obeyed her directions swiftly and in silence. All at once he became alive to the vital importance of this moment. He was almost as excited as she was, as he laid the two blue envelopes before her on the table. She waved her arm wildly towards the door. He understood her meaning and went quickly across the room and locked it.

By this time the old woman was almost incapable of speech. She took from its envelope a long and elaborate document and thrust it into his hands. "He made me write it—read it."

It was a will correctly and elaborately drawn up with all the necessary formula and properly signed and witnessed, evidently the work of a lawyer, probably, from the handwriting, of some low country attorney of little education or breeding. Skimming

through it quickly, Lance perceived to his horror that everything—house, lands, money, pictures, furniture, plate, and jewels—was indiscriminately left to one person—to “My faithful servant Joseph Wilson.”

He looked up from it with indignation. “You cannot intend such an iniquitous will as this to stand!”

“No—no—burn it. I intended to destroy it if I could. Put it into the fire behind you.” With the greatest amount of pleasure he had ever in his life experienced Lance obeyed her. He thrust the document into the hottest corner of the wood fire behind him and held it there with the poker until it was consumed into tinder.

The old woman seemed to grow calmer and more composed when that was done.

“Now,” she said, “come here and I will show you this other. I have written it myself, at odd moments—when he—Wilson was out. I’ve had to be very careful. Is this legal, do you think? Read it and tell me.”

Lance came close to her chair and took the other folded sheet of foolscap paper which she drew cautiously out of its envelope from her hand.

“Read it quickly,” she whispered with a nervous look over her shoulder towards the door; and Lance read :

“This is the last will of me Margaretta Sarah Durham, of Fairmead Hall, Fairley, in the county of Oxford.

“I devise and bequeath all my estate and effects, real and personal, of which I may die possessed of or entitled to, to my great-niece Margaret, absolutely, and I revoke all former wills and codicils.

“Dated 10th day of December, 1889.”

“Is that correct, Mr. Parker? will that be acted upon, if I sign it?” she asked anxiously.

“It is perfectly correct Miss Durham,” replied Lance.

“Very well. Ring the bell three times and the housemaid will come, and you and she shall witness it.”

Lance unlocked the door and rang the bell as desired.

In a few minutes Jane Green, the maid who had gone to Fairley Junction with Madge, and who was still devoted to her

young mistress and wretchedly unhappy at her disappearance, entered timidly. Miss Durham in a few brief words explained the business on hand to her and gave her a crisp five-pound note to help her, she said, to hold her tongue. Then old Miss Durham signed her name to her new will, and Lance and Jane wrote their names below hers. Lance breathed more freely when this was safely accomplished.

"Now give your card to Jane Green, Mr. Parker, and write on it some address which will find you in London. Jane, when I die you are to telegraph at once to this gentleman, to that address, remember."

"Yes, mam."

"Now you may go."

When the girl had left the room, the old woman sank back exhausted into her chair.

"Take it to London with you and keep it till you hear of my death—it won't be long now, it won't be long! and it would not be safe here, that man would suspect me and find it. And now good-bye, go and find Madge, and tell her that her old aunt repented and made amends to her before she died, for all the evil which she had brought upon her, during her life."

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

## MEMORIES AND REGRETS.

"The heart that has truly loved never forgets,  
But as truly loves on to the close!"

—MOORE.

MADGE had become hopeless. She began to resign herself to what she believed to be the will of God. It was evident that she would never now recover her child.

Mrs. Waterson often endeavoured to console her by assuring her that without a doubt the boy must have fallen into good hands, and be well cared for. But Madge believed otherwise; she believed him to be dead.

One night she had so vivid and so wonderful a dream, that she was convinced ever after that it was not a dream at all, but a vision.

It seemed to her that Johnny was standing at the foot of her bed, clad in his little white night-shirt, with his bare pink toes upon the carpet, and his little hands held out to her. There was a smile upon his face, and he looked well and happy.

She raised herself up in bed, and looked at him; she did not dare to speak; she scarcely ventured to breathe, lest this dear and wonderful sight should become lost to her. Then she heard his voice—those childish accents she knew so well, and which had often and often rung in her ears, bringing to her a cruel realization of her loss, now sounded distinctly and clearly through the half-lighted room.

"Muzzer," the voice of little Johnny seemed to say to her, "Muzzer, don't c'y any more—Johnny vezy happy."

And then all was over—the dream or vision, whichever it was, had vanished, and, although she could never remember waking up, she knew immediately afterwards that she was awake, sobbing upon her pillow.

After that, curiously enough, Madge grew more tranquil. She

ceased to fret ; she believed that her boy was in Heaven, and that he had been miraculously allowed to come down and visit her in order to tell her so.

She was comforted. She settled down more thoroughly to her daily life, a little colour and roundness came back into her thin, pale cheeks, a little more life and animation to her step and manner. She began to take an interest in her work, and to experience a satisfaction in earning her own living. She improved rapidly in the business, and her weekly salary was raised. She also became deeply attached to Mrs. Waterson, whilst Constance in her turn realized that she had won to her service a faithful heart, who would work for her with untiring devotion, and serve her with an almost over-scrupulous sense of honesty.

Whenever there was any commission of trust and of importance to be done, it was to Miss Durham that Mrs. Watersen invariably confided it.

Constance found, too, that the pretty ladylike girl was popular with her customers, and once Miss Verinder on her way out of the show-room had said to her :

"When you have occasion to send anything to Hill Street, Mrs. Waterson, I wish you would send it by the same young lady who came before."

"Miss Durham, you mean ?"

"Yes, she is pretty and graceful. I have taken a fancy to her. She looks as if she had had a history."

But Mrs. Waterson was too wide awake a woman of the world to gossip about anybody's past ; she only said with a smile to her wealthy customer :

"I am glad you like her. I will certainly send her to you in future. You may trust her taste, it is excellent."

Oddly enough, about the time that Madge definitely laid aside for ever all hopes of seeing her child again in this world, there began to arise in her heart certain memories (and longings which she had fondly thought had been laid to rest long ago within her).

She began to think often and much of her lost lover. She did not know why the thought of him awoke within her at this period of her life ; perhaps it was because Madge was one of those loveable women who are incapable of enduring existence

without something and someone to idolize and to worship. As long as she had her boy this great need of her heart was filled up. She could endure the loss of the father because of the treasure she had found in the child. But now that her child had been taken from her, it seemed as though the image of her lover returned to her with all its early fascination.

She often caught herself pondering long and earnestly over the past. She read and re-read his cruel letter of farewell, trying to find in it some hidden meaning, some palliation or excuse for his heartlessness and subsequent desertion of her. Often she recalled to mind how her dear Aunt Margaret had firmly believed that some terrible mistake or misunderstanding underlay the strange and inscrutable mystery of Jack's departure; how she had repeatedly assured her that she did not believe the marriage had been an illegal one, and had urged her to take steps to find him.

Perhaps, after all, Aunt Margaret, who had been wise at the same time that she had been foolish, with that mixture of wisdom and foolishness which is sometimes mingled together in those whose hearts are gold, and whose heads are ignorant of the world—perhaps that dear Aunt Margaret had been right! Now that she was dead, Madge was more inclined to believe in her than when she had been alive, and if she had been right, then was she not Jack's wife after all? And the thought sent a strange thrill of pride and delight through her heart.

He might have deserted her, forgotten her, been untrue to her even; but supposing she were his wife still after all, and through it all, then would it not happen that in some future life, if not in this one, they two might come together and be happy again at the last?

So persistently did her thoughts run in this groove, that she began to dream of all sorts of wild and impossible chances. As she sat bending industriously over her work, her mind would be busy with these wild hopes, and as she walked to and fro along the streets, her whole soul would be wrapped up in a reverie in which a reunion with the man she still loved so dearly, hung like a fantastic mirage delusively before her eyes.

Once, when Mrs. Waterson had sent her out in the afternoon to match some trimming at a shop in Bond Street, her heart beat wildly, and a sudden faintness almost overcame her, at

the sight of a gentleman walking on the opposite side of the street.

There was something in his gait and the straight cut of his tall, well-built figure, which reminded her of Jack. She hurried on—he was walking very fast, but still she managed to come up with him—then in a moment she saw that she had made a mistake; his hair was much fairer, and the glimpse of his side face, which she caught sight of, was different—it was only a stranger.

She fell back, sick and weary, and disappointed, and then, after a little, she began to put some searching questions to herself. What, supposing it had indeed been Jack—what would she have done?

Would she have thrown herself upon his mercy and entreated him to take her back and love her once more? Could she have blotted out the past years of neglect and forgetfulness, and have forgiven him and prayed him for his kindness again, as though his cruelty were nothing to her, and nothing had stood between them? She could not tell. She hoped not, because she tried to recollect that she was a Miss Durham, of Fairmead, and that she ought, in consequence, to remember her pride and her dignity; but at her heart of hearts, she secretly feared that if it actually came to such a point with her, Nature would cry out and drown the decorous voices of education and training, and Love would triumph over Pride!

And this latter reflection filled her with shame as well as with sadness.

Late one afternoon, Mrs. Waterson said to her, "There are those French hats just come from the maker's, Miss Durham, I wish you would take them round to Hill Street and ask Miss Verinder to choose which she will have. There are three grey felt ones of different shapes to go with her grey travelling-dress, and two ruby-coloured to match the ruby walking gown. You must get her to select her shapes and to tell you how she will like them trimmed; you can take some wings and feather trimmings with you, and give her your advice."

It was already dark on the short winter afternoon, and Madge put on her hat and jacket and went out into the foggy streets,

where the lamps were just being lighted, with the bandbox upon her arm.

At this very moment, Jack Ludlow was letting himself into the front door at Hill Street with his latch-key.

He had not seen Agnes since their stormy interview of the previous evening. She was never an early riser, and at ten o'clock she had not left her bedroom. Jack, having finished his breakfast, had gone out somewhat more hastily perhaps than he would have done, had he not been in momentary fear of fresh encounters and fresh scenes with the lady of his affections. He scarcely, indeed, waited to see his mother, but pleading "business in the City," went hastily out of the house.

He had no business, either in the City or elsewhere. He went down to his Club and read the papers, sauntered aimlessly about the streets, and called upon his uncle, only to find that he had gone out. He could settle to nothing ; he felt restless and unhappy. The discovery that he had made last night haunted him, the thought of those letters gone wrong so long ago, and with such disastrous consequences—consequences which it was now too late to alter or to remedy—burnt like a fever in his brain and maddened him.

Too late he realised that he had committed a terrible error ; too late he saw that, but for his own mistaken reticence, the whole of his life might have been altered. Yes, he had been a coward in the old days, a coward not to have gone openly and boldly to his uncle and confessed a love in which there was no disgrace, and trusted to his own perseverance to win his consent to his marriage with the girl whose heart he had won. Now, apparently even Lord Castlemere regretted his present choice, and would have been glad enough to have welcomed such a one as Madge into his family—it was the irony of fate !

When he thought over that letter too, he could not but see that Lord Castlemere, who had high-minded and rigid ideas concerning moral purity, might very possibly come to misinterpret its meaning in the same manner that Agnes had done, and that no after efforts of his own to disclose the real circumstances and explain away the suspicious appearances, would suffice to efface the painful impression certain to be made upon the minds both of his uncle and his mother, should they ever come to see it.

He loved them both, he did not desire to give them pain or to arouse their distrust towards himself, and he very distinctly, therefore, did not wish them to see that unfortunate letter.

Yet neither on the other hand, did he intend to buy Agnes' silence by agreeing to her wishes concerning the pearl necklace. For the sake of his own dignity and self respect, no less than for the sake of his inherent repugnance to become her advocate in such a cause, he was quite determined that he would make no effort to persuade his uncle to lend it to her.

He was still most miserable, and much tossed about with doubts and uncertainties, when he came back to Hill Street late in the afternoon. He was told by the butler that Lady Mary and Miss Verinder had not yet returned from their drive—he was glad of it. He turned into a pleasant book-lined room on the ground floor, known as the library, where a lamp had been lit, and he told the man to bring him some tea.

He flung himself into a chair by the fire, and took up a magazine that lay upon the table. He had not sat there many moments, when the door opened softly behind him. Believing it to be the servant with the tea, he did not look up or turn round; he was therefore considerably surprised when he felt something small and soft laid gently upon his knee, and looking up beheld a small, serious-faced boy, standing by his chair, and staring at him fixedly.

Now there was something about the aspect of this little child which caused Jack to return his gaze with an earnestness equal to his own.

Of course he knew in a moment that it must be his mother's little waif—and yet, that was not at all what made him look at him so attentively.

This little morsel of humanity—this mite three foot high, whose little fist lay upon his knee, and whose bright brown eyes looked up so solemnly into his face, was—oh, marvel of marvels! the very living image of himself!

The likeness which had struck his mother at first—but to which she had now grown accustomed—struck Jack too, with a strange and curious sense of bewilderment.

Had his mother noticed it? Would his uncle see it as he did? And then all at once the letter, and the horrible interpretation

which might be put upon it—the child—the likeness—all seemed to come upon him like an evil nightmare, and for a moment he asked himself if he was awake or dreaming—if he was sane or if he was mad!

Who was this child who was so like himself? Where did he come from? Why was this wonderful miniature of his own features staring motionless into his face?

All at once the atom at his knee smiled. The smile was sunshine itself.

"Oo funny man," said Johnny with deliberation, and with distinct approbation in his aspect, "Johnny like oo," and without more ado the baby clambered up on to his lap, put his arms round his neck, and pressed his rosebud lips closely and lovingly upon Jack's cheek.

And then a strange thing happened. Jack, who knew nothing about children—to whom a child was a mysterious, unknown creature, best seen at a distance, and not desirable to meddle with—Jack suddenly felt at his heartstrings the queerest and most unaccountable glow of pleasure and of happiness; he felt—this matter-of-fact young Englishman—he felt that he could *love* this unknown child! He held him tightly to his heart, returned his baby kisses with a strength and fervour at which some children would have been frightened, but which did not terrify Johnny in the least—for the young man proceeded, without more ado, to clench Jack's nose firmly in his fist and to cry exultingly, as he kicked his chubby legs about:

"Nice man, kind man—Johnny loves oo!"

Then all at once there was a commotion outside, and a sound of feminine voices in the hall. The ladies had come in from their drive. Jack tried to put Johnny down, feeling shamefacedly guilty of unaccustomed sentimentality with regard to him, but Johnny clung on with all his might and refused to be put down. So with the child still grasping his neck Jack stood up—just as the door opened and his Agnes in rich sable furs and satin draperies darkened the doorway.

"Brought the hats from Mrs. Waterson's, has she?" she was saying to the servant who opened the door for her. "Show her in here, I will see her before I go upstairs."

"Not in here, Agnes, surely!" cried Jack; "you are not going to see your milliner *here*?"

"Well, and why not, pray?" cried Miss Verinder, looking at him desiantly. "I am going to sec her first, and then I want to speak to you. Good gracious!" she added with disgust; "what on earth are you hugging that horrible brat for? I hate the sight of that child!"

At this Johnny clung harder to him, and his baby face began to wrinkle itself into ominous puckers. There was evidently no love lost between the two.

"Look at him now," continued Agnes, "of course he is going to howl. I never knew such a horrid child!"

"I think you might speak more kindly to the poor little mite," said Jack with indignation, "especially as my mother is so fond of him." And then he walked away to the other end of the room with the boy in his arms.

The room was long and narrow, and at the further end of it was a kind of recess, beyond which again there opened a small conservatory filled with palms and winter shrubs.

Jack stood with his back to the room, talking in low tones to the boy, and trying to pacify his little wounded heart by telling him little stories about the plants.

Johnny perched on his shoulder, leant his chin confidingly against his new friend's head, and was soon quite happy again.

"Show the young person in here at once," called out Agnes to the butler.

The door opened, and the "young person" came in.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## TOGETHER AT LAST.

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream."

—BYRON.

WHILST Lance Parker was hurrying back to London as fast as an express train could carry him, with old Miss Durham's will in his coat-pocket and the great news concerning Madge in his heart—he came, on the way, to a very wise and rational conclusion. He determined to go on his arrival straight to Lord Castlemere's rooms. He felt that he was not equal in his own person and by his own authority to the upsetting of the arrangements of the entire family, unless the head of that family were primarily enlisted in the cause he was compelled to plead. On his arrival in Town therefore he drove, in the first place, to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he deposited Miss Durham's will in the hands of his own solicitor; afterwards he set out for Bury Street, where he failed to find his man, but ran him to ground at last in the reading-room of the Conservative Club.

The mission on which he had come was a delicate one, and Lance felt decidedly nervous as he proceeded to unfold his story—but Lord Castlemere had always been friendly to him, and as he continued to explain the history of Jack's early romance—to express his own conviction that he had been actually married—and to disclose his recent discovery that Madge was in all human probability still alive—he was rejoiced to see that Lord Castlemere became deeply interested and even greatly excited, but that he was not in the very least angry or disbelieving.

"And this girl—whom you believe him to have married?" he asked, when the narrative was at an end. "She is a lady you say?"

"Absolutely and thoroughly, my lord, and one of the most sweet and charming girls you can imagine. She comes of a good country family, the Durhams have owned Fairmead Hall for several generations, and as I tell you, Miss Durham, an old lady of over eighty, has just confided to my care a new will which I witnessed, leaving her very handsome property entirely to her niece, whom she believes to be still alive. You must see

that of course Jack's marriage to Miss Verinder must at any rate be postponed until we can learn some definite tidings of her."

"If it were to be postponed altogether it would be a matter of rejoicing to me, Parker," cried Lord Castlemere with energy, "for I do not mind telling you that I have heard the most unsatisfactory rumours concerning Miss Verinder. I have this afternoon seen an old friend of mine—the Duchess of St. Grail, and I have with some trouble extracted from her the fact that Miss Verinder for the last two seasons has made herself exceedingly conspicuous with a certain Major Lawley, to whom everybody believed her to be engaged, in fact it appears that she only gave this gentleman his final *congé* quite lately, after Jack's return to England; so that she never can have had any real affection for my poor boy. Any good girl who loved him would please me better than she does now."

"Believe me, Lord Castlemere, Miss Durham—or rather Mrs. Ludlow as I ought to call her—is far more worthy of Jack than Miss Verinder."

"You are *sure* that he married her? You do not think that—that—"

"I can think nothing but what is right of both of them, my lord," cried Lance, somewhat hotly. "If you had seen *her*, you would know that to doubt her goodness is impossible—and there is a child—a boy—that is proof enough to my mind."

"A child!" repeated the old man softly with a long in-drawn breath indicative of profound emotion. "A boy too—an heir!—the thing of all others I have longed for most! Oh, why in the name of fortune did not Jack tell me of this marriage long ago? I would have forgiven him—why did he not confide in me?"

"Ah! why indeed? for no reason that I can see save that it is not in Jack's nature to make confidences, and then you see he knew nothing of the child's existence, and the old woman wrote and told him his wife was dead, and he was away abroad at the time and could do nothing, and so I suppose, upon the principle of 'least said soonest mended,' he thought that he would bury the whole episode for ever and keep his secret to his life's end. And now, Lord Castlemere, having told you all and laid the whole case in your hands, what steps are you going to take to

find out whether she still lives? for recollect, she may even now have perished of want and neglect. You have money and you have influence——”

“And they shall both be used to their uttermost, never fear, Parker! I will leave no stone unturned, but the first thing we have got to do, you and I, is to go and tell all this to Lady Mary, she will have come in from her drive by this hour. We shall find her at home. She is about the wisest woman I know as well as the best, and she will understand exactly what are the first steps we must take to set right this veritable chapter of errors.”

He rose from his chair, called for his hat and coat, and they started together for Hill Street in a hansom.

\* \* \* \* \*

When the young lady from Mrs. Waterson's came into the library at Hill Street at Miss Verinder's bidding, she found that lady standing by the table in front of the fire, awaiting her. There was a duplex lamp on the table, but it was covered by a large dark red silk shade, so that the rest of the room was shrouded in gloom. She deposited the band-box on the table and busied herself with unfastening the strap.

Madge was quite composed and tranquil, but Agnes was almost speechless with excitement; she was about to accomplish her evil purpose, and, by bringing Jack face to face with this love of his youth, to confound and put him to utter confusion! They were in the same room together now—in another moment Jack would become aware of her identity! and then—how would he after to-day dare to tell her again that the woman was dead? how would he be able to deny his guilty past, or to make excuses for his false and deceitful conduct? Her heart beat wildly in anticipation—already she seemed to see her own triumph, and his discomfiture, and the unutterable shame of the wretched woman who had been the victim of his guilt. Already she was gloating over his utter moral annihilation!

The letter too was in the bosom of her dress, she would fling it down between them, so that both should see that to deceive and hoodwink her as to their past relations was impossible. After this, would Jack ever dare again to take that high and superior tone with her which exasperated her so much? if he heard stories of her past flirtation with Hugh Lawley would he

be able to cast it in her teeth? and above all would he persist now in his refusal to help her to get hold of the pearl necklace?

All these reflections excited her so much that she was scarcely mistress of herself. Leaning upon the table with both hands, her breath coming short and hard, she gazed defiantly and menacingly at her rival, but said not a word.

Vaguely surprised by the lady's continued silence, Madge lifted her innocent blue eyes, and she experienced a little shock of dismay and uneasiness at the unexpected malignity of the gleaming eyes that encountered her own. What ailed the beautiful Miss Verinder to-day? she wondered. Why did she look at her so strangely, so angrily?

Then, not being able to understand it, Madge lowered her eyes and lifted the hats one by one out of the box.

"Mrs. Waterson said I was to ask you to select which shapes you wish to have," she said quietly; "these are for the grey dress and those for the ruby."

The decisive moment had come, *how* decisive Agnes did not as yet fully know!

"Jack!" she called aloud, looking round towards the back room, "Jack, come here, I want you to give me your opinion."

At the self-same moment, little Johnny, who, hoisted on his new friend's arm, had been looking back into the room over his shoulder, began to struggle and kick in the most unaccountable manner; he became suddenly like a captured rabbit, that fights to get free; his whole body writhing and wriggling and twisting itself downwards out of his captor's arms.

"Let me go!" he cried breathlessly. "Let me go to my muzzer. I want to go to my muzzer!"

Madge lifted her startled eyes. Out of the gloom of the further end of the long room into the nearer radiance of the circle of rosy light, there emerged suddenly a small flying object, the stumping sound of little flat soles, two chubby fists stretched out, a tiny face dimpled with baby laughter, and a lisping voice that shouted loudly:

"Muzzer, muzzer, muzzer!"

Down went the Paris hats pell-mell on to the carpet. Madge uttered one wild cry, and darted forward, and falling prone upon her knees before the advancing child, caught him madly to her heart, and then and there burst into so strange a confusion of

laughter and of tears, of cries of joy and of incoherent sounds of love, covering his face and neck and arms the while with frantic kisses, such as no pen can depict and no words are able rightly to describe.

It was the very delirium of joy.

Gazing in utter bewilderment from the opposite ends of the room, the two other persons most interested in this strange and lovely scene, stood for a moment speechless and spell-bound.

The little group was half-way between them both, the kneeling mother in her frantic joy, and the happy laughing child, clinging to one another in an ecstasy of love—they heard nothing, saw nothing, thought of nothing, save only of each other.

All at once into that Paradise of maternal joy, there entered something else, a heavy footstep strode down the room.

Upon Madge's bowed head as she devoured her child's soft neck with kisses, a hand was suddenly laid, and a man's deep voice awoke her from her trance of happiness.

"Madge—my God! Madge! is it you?"

She lifted her head—he stood above her—she was kneeling literally at his feet—the body of the child between them; her face was no longer pale and sad, but flushed with a brilliant carmine and radiant with new life, and in her heaven-blue eyes there flashed the tender beauty of her divine mother love. Once more she was the Madge of his youth, the sweet girl wife he had loved and lost.

"Jack!" she murmured wonderingly in an awestruck whisper, recoiling a little from him as she knelt, for at that moment she scarcely knew whether she were alive or dead—whether what she saw was real, or only some vision of another world that would presently vanish away into nothingness from her sight, "Jack, have you come back to me?"

Then he lifted her from the ground and clasped her in his arms, holding her tightly to his heart and covering her lips with passionate kisses.

"Come back? Yes, I have come back for ever, my child, my darling, my love!—never, never to part from you again."

And the little child, capering beside them, clung laughing with delight to their hands.

In that moment, they were conscious of nothing; the un-

fathomable mystery that had divided them, the still more wonderful mystery that had brought them together, the years of pain and absence which lay behind them—they had forgotten them all.

And they had also forgotten Miss Agnes Verinder.

It was her voice of rage and indignation which caused them at last to spring guiltily asunder.

"Jack! how dare you kiss that woman in my presence? how dare you insult me by owning your shameful connection with her? and you, you bold faced and brazen girl, go back to your shop——"

She never finished her sentence.

"Hold your tongue, Agnes," cried Jack, and took Madge's arm within his own as he strode forward towards her, "you do not know what you are saying—this lady is my wife."

"Your—what! *your wife?*?" gasped Agnes falling back—she turned pale as death, then after a second, added with inexpressible contempt: "It is false, I do not believe you. It is a lie."

"Whether you believe it or not, it does not matter much, since it happens to be the truth. I married this lady, Miss Durham, four and a half years ago, and I was led to believe that she died in my absence abroad a few months after our marriage—that must be my excuse for the grievous wrong I have unwittingly done you, Agnes, in asking you to be my wife. I believed myself to be a free man. Until five minutes ago I believed it. How this miracle has come to pass and she is still alive and here in this house, I have yet to learn," he added, turning with a fond smile towards Madge. "No doubt soon we shall understand it all, although at present, I confess, I am somewhat bewildered! Meanwhile, Agnes, I entreat you to forgive me for being the cause of much distress and disappointment to you, I hope and believe it is nothing worse. Let us, at any rate, say good-bye to one another in peace, and let us at least be thankful that, owing to this opportune return to life of the wife I believed to be dead, I have been mercifully spared from unwittingly bringing upon you a yet far more cruel and irredeemable injury."

His words were kind and moderate in tone, he felt for her acutely, and not knowing how she had plotted to humiliate him

he was painfully conscious of the distress which she must be now enduring.

After all, what Agnes felt was perhaps scarcely distress—rage, bitter and helpless, the mortification to her vanity—a wild longing for vengeance upon the innocent woman who had supplanted her, and a strong disgust to find the tables turned in so extraordinary a manner upon herself.

These were amongst the chief sensations she experienced; but far above them all was the hopeless and blank disappointment of losing her future position and all the Castle Regis jewellery, the necklace included, and the misery and despair which overcame her at the thought of her beautiful, but now entirely useless, Rousseau.

The remembrance of this made her feel absolutely murderous. She would not see Jack's outstretched hand. Only, scarcely knowing what she did, she flung down the old letter furiously upon the table, gathered her sable cloak about her, and casting one horrible glance of rage and defiance at Madge, she left the room without another word.

Upstairs, in the drawing-room, in total ignorance of the eventful things which were taking place below, Lord Castlemere and Lance were unfolding their strange story to Lady Mary's wondering ears, and, oddly enough, she also experienced a sense of relief that her beautiful favourite, Agnes Verinder, could now, perhaps, never become her daughter-in-law.

Lord Castlemere, in a low voice, had confided his own doubts to her, and then Lady Mary admitted that she too had been disenchanted of late.

"You cannot think," she told him, "how heartlessly and hardly she behaved about that poor little boy whom I have adopted. There was something so thoroughly unwomanly in the attitude she took up about him, that I have never been able to forgive her or to like her as much since. It only shows how one may be deceived in a person's character!"

"If we can only find this lost young lady," said her brother-in-law."

"The first step, I think," said Lady Mary, "is to inform Jack of all that Mr. Parker has discovered, and to find out from him where he was married, so that we may be provided, for the sake of form, with the registers of the marriage," for Lady Mary, no

more than Lance, never doubted for one moment her son's rectitude of conduct towards Madge, "and upon myself will then fall the painful task of acquainting Agnes with our suspicions. It is, of course, hard upon her, but I cannot altogether regret it."

Then she got up and rang the bell.

"Where is Mr. Ludlow? Has he come in?" she asked the footman.

"He is in the library, my lady."

"And Miss Verinder?"

"Miss Verinder is in her room. She has just rung for her maid, my lady, to help her to pack up," added the man, who, in common with the rest of the household, had become aware of the fact that something extraordinary and out of the common was going on amongst his betters.

"To pack up!" repeated Lady Mary. And then the three conspirators looked at one another in blank amazement.

"And is Mr. Ludlow alone in the library?" continued Lady Mary, trying to look unconcerned.

Thomas coughed slightly behind his hand, and looked away. After a moment he said, with some hesitation:

"Hickman"—this was the butler—"Hickman told me just now, that there is a young lady in the library with Mr. Ludlow—the young lady as comes here sometimes from the dress-maker's."

At this startling announcement Lady Mary coloured very much, and Lord Castlemere said with decision:

"I think we had better go down and find Jack in the library, my dear. Will you come too, Parker?"

He offered his arm to his sister-in-law with old-fashioned gallantry, and so they all three went downstairs.

And when Lady Mary softly opened the door, lo and behold! there was displayed to them a wonderful scene, of which they were all three the unseen spectators.

On a low arm-chair by the fire sat Jack, holding upon his knee a slender and graceful young woman. His arms were around her waist, her soft, rosy cheek rested against his forehead, with one hand she stroked the back of his head caressingly, whilst with the other she fondly supported the small person of Master Johnny, who, perched between his parents on the arm of

the chair, was balancing himself in that precarious position with some difficulty. On Madge's knee lay the open letter, which had explained for itself the whole history of the blunders of the past.

Suddenly into the midst of this charming picture of domestic happiness, there rushed wildly the excited and unromantic form of Lancelot Parker.

Our friend Lance had no pretty speeches of congratulatory import at his command, he stood there gasping and puffing and ejaculating, wringing first Madge's hands and then Jack's in an ecstasy of delight, and with an ardour and energy which caused his friends some physical discomfort; whilst tears which did not, I think, discredit his manhood, glittered very visibly in his unlovely but honest eyes.

Then spake Jack to the two who stood behind him:

"Dearest mother—my dear uncle! How am I to tell you the wonderful thing that has happened? I do not know how to speak—only—only—this is my dear wife, whom I secretly married years ago, and whom I have long believed to be dead, and this boy, whom my mother, in her goodness and loving charity has befriended and adopted, is her own grandchild: my son, and your heir, Lord Castlemere!"

And then, with a little gush of fatherly pride, which sat oddly, yet somewhat touchingly upon him, Jack picked up the boy and placed him in Lord Castlemere's arms.

Master Johnny, with much self-possession, laughed and chattered and tugged delightedly at his great-uncle's grey whiskers; he evidently considered the whole performance a very great piece of fun.

Lady Mary tearfully clasped her son and his wife, in turn, to her heart.

When they were all composed enough to speak, Lord Castlemere cleared his throat and said:

"A very jolly little chap—very like you, Jack, and very like your dear mother. He does you great credit, Mrs. Ludlow," and then, turning to Jack, he added, "But why on earth, my dear boy, you took the trouble to conceal your marriage with this charming young lady from all your friends and relations, and so place us all upon the brink of a horrible family tragedy by your silence, I really cannot possibly imagine!"

"Nor I either, uncle," answered Jack, with a happy laugh. "All I have to say in excuse for myself is, that if we were all as wise before, as we are after the event, if we all knew for certain what was going to happen to us in the future, and how our friends would regard the rash and impulsive actions of our lives, and if everybody were immediately to confess everything he had ever done to everybody else, why then, the world would contain no more romances, and lovers would never have any more secrets!"

THE END.

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Vol. LXXXIII

No. 290.

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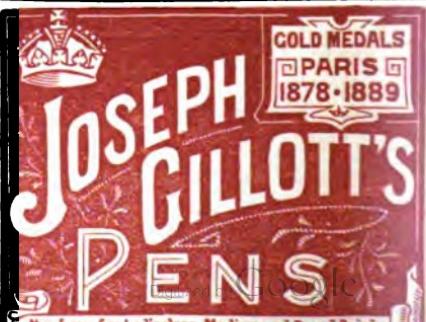
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## THE REV. E. F. SHAW.

### AN INTERESTING INCIDENT IN HIS LIFE.

THE REV. E. F. SHAW, F.R.A.S., who resides in London, at 122, Elgin Avenue, W., is the only brother of Captain Shaw, of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and during the month of June, 1889, when he was in a very weak state of health, he happily took up a London daily paper and carefully read through four whole columns of letters—all convincing testimonials in favour of Harness' Electropathic Belts. Each report explained how a marvellous cure had been effected by simply wearing one of these genuine and convenient health appliances. Amongst those who had by these simple means been completely restored to health were men and women of all stations in life, who had suffered from various obstinate ailments, including the following: nervous exhaustion, hysteria, brain fag, melancholia, sleeplessness, neuralgia, rheumatism, gout, sciatica, lumbago, torpid liver, indigestion, constipation, internal weakness, disorder of the kidneys and other organs, epilepsy, impaired vitality, &c. There were also testimonials from rupture sufferers, who had been wonderfully relieved by wearing Harness' improved Hernia Appliances.

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FOR nearly 100 years a certain family of working people living in Paris have ended their lives by suicide. From father to son, from mother to daughter, has descended a plain gold ring, and on the finger of every one of these suicides, as they lay in death, this ring has been found. Only last year the body of a young man who had killed himself was brought to the Morgue, and on his finger was the fatal golden circlet. He was the last of his race. The ring was buried with the corpse, from which no one acquainted with its history will have the courage to remove it.

The mental taint in this family came from some remote ancestor, and was intensified by their recognition of it until it became a controlling force; and the ring was accepted as imposing upon its possessor the obligation to commit suicide, after the example of the person who last wore it. This form of mania usually originates in a disorder of the nervous system, which in its turn arises from anaemia, or poverty of the blood, one of the results of imperfect nutrition.

A recent letter from a gentleman living in Norfolk contains the following assertion: "*I longed for death; I was afraid of the night; I was afraid to be alone, yet I hated society. I was afraid that in some one of those hours of deep gloom and depression I should lift my hand against my own life, for I knew that many had done so from the same cause.*" The dark hours became a time of terror to him, so he says. He tossed and tumbled on his bed, wondering if morning would ever dawn again. In this case it was not an accusing conscience, as he had committed no offence; the cause was purely a physical one—yet all too common in England—indigestion and dyspepsia, with the long chain of consequences dragging after it, nervous collapse among them.

He relates that his skin and eyes had been more or less discoloured for years, often of a ghastly and repulsive yellow. This was due to the presence of bile in the blood and tissues, where it had no business to be. But as the weak and torpid liver could not remove it, no other result was possible than the one our friend experienced. His head frequently ached as though fiends had turned it into a workshop, and pains chased one another through his body as though he had at least half the maladies catalogued in the popular books on disease.

Yet one thing, and one only, was responsible for all the mischief, namely, the poison introduced into the blood from the decaying food in the stomach and intestines. The cold feet, the loss of appetite and ambition, the mental despondency, the sense of weariness and fatigue, the bad taste in the mouth, dry cough, giddiness, palpitation, chills, weakness, &c., are a brood of foul birds hatched in one nest, and the mother is always indigestion and dyspepsia.

Time passed somehow, as it always does whether we laugh or cry, and this man grew heartily tired of a life thus burdened and spoiled. He longed to see the end of it, and no wonder. But the last page of his letter is pitched in a higher key. He says, "When I think of what I was, and what I am now, I can hardly realise the change. For the past six months I have been using a preparation known as Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and it has actually revolutionised my whole system. One of my tenants recommended it to me, and I tried it just to please him. Now I praise it for myself, and thank the men who make and advertise it. My troubles are over, and I feel (at 57) as light, elastic and gay as a boy on his summer vacation. I tell my doctors they are beaten at their own trade by an old German nurse, and so far as I am concerned they can't deny it. I have no more horrible thoughts of self-destruction, for I find too much enjoyment in living. My thanks are too deep for words."

The author of this letter consents to the publication of so much of it as is here printed, but declines to allow the use of his name, at least for the present, for reasons we are bound to respect. But the evident sincerity of his story will carry conviction to every candid mind.



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DECEMBER, 1890.

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Aratus, brigantine, of Teignmouth—rendered assistance.		Florence, steamer, of Preston.....	Olga, brig, of Rönne.....
Ark, ketch, of Bridgewater .....	3	Fly, of Pre-ton—put a pilot on board.	Patrick, smack, of Peel .....
Ardlow, ship, of Windsor, N.S.—rendered assistance.		Fortuna, brig, of Riga.....	Perseverance, smack .....
Arnold, schooner, of Copenhagen .....	5	Gannett, steam trawler, of Granton.....	President Harbts, barque, of Sandfjord—remained by vessel.
Asiel, barque, of Drammen—landed a pilot.		Gavibaldi, lugger, of Gravelines .....	Queen of Tenghai, ketch, of Youghal—landed crew and saved vessel.....
Basur, brig, of Oscarshamn .....	6	Glenaire, s.s., of Cork—saved vessel and.....	Reliance, brigantine, of Wexford & Roscommon, schooner, of Swanscombe—rendered assistance.
Bee, lugger, of Winterton .....	3	Glynwood, barquentine, of Rhyl—rendered assistance.	Richard and Francis, sloop, of Goole—remained by vessel.
Birling, s.s., of London—rendered assistance.		Gorleston boat .....	Riagewood, steamer—rendered assistance.
Blue Bell, trawler, of Plymouth....	4	Gourdon fishing boat .....	Ros Cuff, schooner, of Skene .....
Bonnie Lass, schooner, of Wick....		Gourdon fishing boats—remained in attendance.	St. George, ship, of Christiansand.....
Border Queen, fishing smack, of Aruman—remained by vessel.		Harrowe Home, schooner, of Preston .....	Stadtwa von Brock, brig, of Rostock .....
Boulmer fishing cables—rendered assistance.		Infatigable, Swedish barque .....	Statthes fishing cables—rendered assistance.
Brilliant, schooner, of Peel—saved vessel and .....	4	Inveresk, barque, of Liverpool—rendered assistance.	Star of Hope, schooner, of Wembury—assisted to save vessel and .....
British Sovereign, fishing boat—saved vessel and .....	6	Iota, schooner, of Inverness.....	Sybil, schooner, of Beaumaris .....
Brucklay Castle, barque, of Aberdeen—rendered assistance.		Jane, fishing smack, of Annan—remained by vessel.	Terlings, s.s., of London.....
Cari Recreio, brigantine, of Hengistow .....	10	Jane Kilgour, barque, of Dundee—saved vessel and .....	Thomas, schooner, of Liverpool—rendered assistance.
Cerdic, s.s., of Newcastle-on-Tyne—rendered assistance.		Janet, brig, of Peterhead.....	Topy, cutter, of Torquay—saved vessel and .....
Ceres, schooner, of Carnarvon—rendered assistance.		Janette and Jane, schooner, of Carnarvon—assisted to save vessel and .....	Vela-heli, schooner, of Carnarvon—remained by vessel.
Charles, brigantine, of Great Yarmouth—saved vessel and .....	6	Lady Alice, s.s., of London—rendered assistance.	Verona, lugger, of Lowestoft .....
Charles Eliza, schooner, of Palmopol—assisted to save vessel and .....	6	Lady Eglington, s.s., of Cardiff—saved vessel and .....	Viscountess, s.s., of Aberdeen—remained by vessel.
Clutha, s.s., of Middlesbrough—rendered assistance.		Lady Katherine, s.s., of Sunderland .....	Volunteer, boat, of Ramsey, I.M.—rendered assistance.
Colridge, s.s., of Exeter—landed a pilot.		Lark, smack, of Portmadoe—remained by vessel.	Wave, ketch, of Gloucester—rendered assistance.
Confit, smack, of Scarborough .....	5	Lee, s.s., of Cork—remained by vessel and saved.....	William Jones, schooner, of Carnarvon .....
Corbeta, steamer, of Havre—remained by vessel.		Linnet, dandy, of Lowestoft .....	William Mastil, schooner, of Goole .....
Crown Avon, schooner, of Swansea .....	4	Londesborough, brig, of Faversham .....	
Dekar, schooner, of Hull.....	4	Lymington, schooner, of Harwich .....	
Dorothy Watson, schooner, of North Shields.....	5	Madryn, schooner, of Carnarvon—saved vessel and .....	
Dromming Sophie, barque .....	11	Maggie, schooner, of Ardrossan—assisted to save vessel and .....	
Do. —rendered assistance.		Maita, s.s., of Glasgow—rendered assistance and saved.....	
Edward, galiot, of Skonevig—saved vessel and .....	2	Mandalay, barque, of Glasgow—assisted to save vessel and .....	
Effort, smack, of Berwick .....	2	Mary, schooner, of Montrose .....	
Elbow and Awk, dandy, of Liverpool .....	4	Minerva, ketch, of Bridgewater .....	
Elise, Norwegian barque—remained by vessel.		Minnie Eliza, schooner, of Carnarvon—saved vessel and .....	
Enterprise, schooner, of Dublin... ..	4	Mitford, barque, of Newcastle—landed 2 men.	
Ethel, schooner, of Faversham .....	6	Montrose fishing boats—remained in attendance.	
Ferryden fishing boats—remained in attendance.			

During the year 1889 the ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION expended £46,817 in connection with its Life-Boat Establishments on the Coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, in addition to having contributed to the saving of 627 persons from various Shipwrecks on our Coasts. The rewards granted by the Committee in recognition of these and other services connected with the Life-Boat cause comprised 8 Silver Medals, 8 Second Service Clasps, 10 Binocular Glasses, 1 Aneroid Barometer, 8 framed Certificates of Service, 25 Votes of Thank-inscribed on Vellum and framed, and £5,108, including grants to the relatives of Lifeboatmen who perished while on duty.

The number of lives saved, either by the Life-Boats of the Society, or by special exertions for which it has granted rewards, since its formation, is 25,158; for which services 97 Gold Medals, 1,030 Silver Medals and Clasps 184 Binocular Glasses, 15 Telescopes, 4 Aneroid Barometers, 9 framed Certificates of Service, 1,278 Votes of Thanks inscribed on Vellum and framed, and £111,316 have been given as rewards.

*It should be specially noted that the Life-Boat crews, excepting when remunerated by the owners of vessels for property salvage services, are paid by the Institution for their efforts, whether successful or not, in saving life.*

The average expense of a Life-Boat Station is £1,050, which includes £700 for the Life-Boat and her equipment, including Life-Belts for the crew, and Transporting Carriage for the Life-Boat, and £350 for the Boat-house (average cost). The approximate annual expense of maintaining a Life-Boat Station is £70.

Lives saved by Life-Boats in 1889, in addition to 17 vessels ..... 420  
During the same period the Institution granted rewards for saving lives by fishing and other boats..... 207

Number saved in 1889 ..... 637

Total of Lives saved since the establishment of the Institution in 1834—35,134

Good morning!



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Pears' Soap?

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# Caution to Parents.

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THE delicate Skin of Infants and Children is particularly liable to injury from coarse and unrefined Toilet Soap, which is commonly adulterated with the most pernicious ingredients; hence frequently the irritability, redness, and blotchy appearance of the Skin from which many children suffer. It should be remembered that

## ARTIFICIALLY COLOURED SOAPS ARE FREQUENTLY POISONOUS,

particularly the Red, Blue, and Green varieties; and nearly all Toilet Soaps contain an excess of Soda. White Soaps, such as "Curd," usually contain much more soda than others, owing to the use of cocoa nut oil, which makes a bad, strongly alkaline Soap, very injurious to the skin, besides leaving a disagreeable odour on it. The serious injury to children resulting from these Soaps often remains unsuspected in spite of Nature's warnings, until the unhealthy and irritable condition of the skin has developed into some unsightly disease, not infrequently baffling the skill of the most eminent Dermatologists.

## PEARS' SOAP

is absolutely pure, free from excess of alkali (Soda), and from artificial colouring matter. It is specially recommended for Infants and Children, because it is perfectly pure, and does not irritate their delicate sensitive skin, nor make their little eyes smart. It lasts so long that *it is certainly the CHEAPEST as well as the BEST Toilet Soap.* It makes Children feel comfortable, and hence happy after their bath, and by its use the natural softness and brightness of their complexions are improved and preserved.

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# HONEST SOAP.

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Professor of Chemistry and Pharmacy to the Pharmaceutical Society  
of Great Britain.

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"The proportion of alkalies to fats is absolutely chemically  
"correct. In a perfect toilet soap neither preponderates—a  
"characteristic the immense importance of which the public  
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"alkali or an excess of fat being alike very injurious, and even  
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"It is also free from any admixture of artificial colouring  
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"The perfumes introduced are pure, agreeable, and per-  
"fectly harmless.

"No water has been added. Water is quite commonly added  
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"*all soap instead of soap and water*, it is remarkably  
"lasting, that is to say, that whilst producing an abundant lather  
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"smallest possible piece; there being consequently no waste  
"*it is really a remarkably cheap article.*

"My analytical and practical experience of PEARS' SOAP  
"now extends over a very lengthened period—nearly fifty years—  
"during which time I have never come across another Toilet  
"Soap which so closely comes up to my ideal of perfection; its  
"purity is such that it may be used with perfect confidence  
"upon the tenderest and most sensitive skin—even that of a  
"*new born babe.*"

*Redwood, Ph.D., F.I.C., F.C.S.*

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